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THE TWO DIANAS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SON OF A COUNT, AND THE DAUGHTER OF A KING.

It was on the 5th of May, 1551, that a young man, about eighteen years of age, and a woman about forty, issuing out of a house of humble appearance, traversed together the little village of Montgomery, which lies near Auge. The young man was of that beautiful Norman race, distinguished by their chestnut hair, blue eyes, white teeth, and rosy lips: he had that soft fresh complexion, which occasionally takes something of power from the beauty of the northern men, making it almost womanly; his figure, however, was both strong and flexible; he was elegantly dressed in a pourpoint of deep violet cloth, with embroideries of the same colour; his boots of black leather, mounting above the knees, were such as were then worn by young pages; and a velvet cap, set a little on one side, and shaded by a white plume, covered a brow, indicating at once firmness and sweet temper. His horse, whose bridle was over his arm, followed him. The woman seemed to belong to the lower class of society, or at least to the grade between that and the bourgeoisie: her dress was simple, but extremely neat.

As they went through the village, every one, young and old, saluted the young man, who replied to them by a friendly nod. Each seemed to recognise

superior in him, who scarcely knew yet, himself, that he was so.

Leaving the village, they took a path, which, leading to the top of the mountain, scarcely left room for two people to walk abreast, and the young man asked his companion to go first, as it was dangerous for her to walk behind, on account of his horse: she obeyed, and he followed her, silent, and evidently preoccupied. They were approaching a fine old castle, which had taken four centuries and ten generations, to attain its present venerable appearance: like all castles of that period, that of Montgomery had little regularity, it had descended from father to son, and each proprietor had, according to his own caprice, added something to the giant of stone. The square tower had been built under the Dukes of Normandy, and then others, more florid in their construction, had been subsequently added. Towards the end of the reign of Louis XII., a long gallery, with painted windows, had completed the building: from this gallery, and from the top of the tower, the view extended for many leagues, over the rich plains of Normandy.

At last they arrived at the grand entrance. Strange to tell, for more than fifteen years this magnificent castle had been without a master: an old steward continued to collect the rents, servants, who had grown old in this solitude, remained in the castle, which they opened every day, as if each day the master was expected to return.

The steward received his two visitors, with friendship for the woman, and deference for the young man.

"Maître Elyot," said she, "let us come into the castle, I have something to say to M. Gabriel, and I wish to say it in the state room."

"Go in, Dame Aloyse," replied he, "and say where you wish, what you have to say to monsieur: you know, that unfortunately, no one will come to disturb you."

They crossed the hall, where formerly twelve

armed men had constantly watched. Seven of these had died, and had not been replaced. Five remained, doing the same duty, as in the count's time. They entered the drawing-room—it was left just as the count had quitted it. Only into this apartment, where formerly all the nobility of Normandy was to be seen, no one had entered for fifteen years, but the servants. It was not without emotion that Gabriel gazed on this room, but the impression which he received from the sombre walls was not sufficiently powerful to distract his thoughts for a moment, for as soon as the door was closed, he said, "Now, my dear Aloyse, my good nurse, although you really seem more moved than myself, you have no longer a pretext to avoid the history which you have promised me. Speak at once, I pray; have you not hesitated enough, and have I not waited like an obedient son? When I asked you what name I had a right to bear, what was my family, and who was my father, you replied to me, 'Gabriel, I will tell you all, on the day that you attain your eighteenth year, the age of majority for those who have a right to wear a sword.' Now this 5th of May is the day, and I came, my good Aloyse, to summon you to keep your promise; but you replied to me with a solemnity, which almost frightened me, 'It is not within the humble walls of a poor squire's widow, that I will disclose to you your birth: it is in the state room of the castle of Montgomery.' We have climbed the mountain, and are now in the chosen place—so speak."

"Sit down, Gabriel, for you permit me once more to give you this name."

The young man took her hands, with a movement full of affection. "Sit down," continued she, "not on this chair—nor that."

"Where then, good nurse?"

"Under that dais," said Aloyse, in a solemn voice. The young man obeyed. "Now listen to me."

"But sit down first."

"You permit it?"

"Are you jesting?"

The good woman sat down on the steps of the dais, at the feet of the young man, and then began—

"Gabriel, you were hardly six years old, when you lost your father, and I, my husband. You were my nursling, for your mother died in giving you birth. From that day, I, the foster-sister of your mother, have loved you as my own child; the widow devoted her life to the orphan, and as she gave you her milk, she gave you her heart. You will render me this justice, will you not, Gabriel—that I have never ceased to watch over you?"

"Dear Aloyse," said the young man, "many real mothers would have done less than you have done, and none, I feel sure, could have done more."

"All, however," continued the nurse, "have been anxious to do their best for you. Dom Jamet de Croisin, the worthy chaplain of this castle, who died about three months ago, instructed you carefully, and no one, they say, can surpass you at reading, writing, or in the past history of France. Enquerrand Lorien, the intimate friend of my poor husband, and the old squire of the Counts of Vimoutiers, have instructed you with care in the science of arms, in the management of the lance and the sword, in horsemanship, and in all things pertaining to chivalry. At the fêtes and jousts, which were held at Alençon, on the occasion, both of the coronation and the marriage of our gracious king, Henry the Second, you proved, even two years ago, how well you had profited by these lessons. I could but love you, and teach you to serve God; that I have always tried to do. The Holy Virgin has aided me, and now at eighteen, you are a pious Christian, a learned gentleman, and an accomplished soldier. I trust, that with God's help, you will not be unworthy of your ancestors, Monseignor Gabriel, Seigneur de Lorge, Comte de Montgomery!!"

Gabriel rose with a cry.—"Comte de Montgomery—I!" cried he. "Well, I hoped it, I almost

suspected it. Do you know, Aloyse, that in my childish dreams, I once said so to my little Diana. But what are you doing there, at my feet, Aloyse? Come into my arms, good nurse: can I no longer be your child, because I am the heir of the Montgomeries—a Montgomery!" repeated he, proudly, while he embraced his good nurse. "I bear, then, one of the oldest and most glorious names in France:—Yes, Dom Jamet has taught me, man by man, the history of my noble ancestors. Of my ancestors! Embrace me again, Aloyse! What will Diana say to all this? St. Godegrand, bishop of Suez, and St. Opportune, his sister, who lived under Charlemagne, were of our house—Roger de Montgomery commanded one of the armies of William the Conqueror—William de Montgomery went a crusade at his own expense. We have been allied more than once to the royal houses of Scotland and of France, and the first English and French noblemen will call me cousin,"—but suddenly stopping, he said in a lower tone, "Alas! with all this, Aloyse, I am alone in the world—the great lord is a poor orphan, the descendant of so many royal ancestors, has no father. My poor father! and my mother—dead, both of them dead. Oh! speak to me of them, that I may know what they were, now I know that I am their son. Begin with my father. How did he die?"

Aloyse was silent. Gabriel looked at her with astonishment,—"I asked you, nurse," repeated he, "how my father died."

"Monsieur, God only knows. One day Comte Jacques de Montgomery left his house in the Rue des Jardins de St. Paul, at Paris; he never returned to it. His friends and his cousins sought him in vain. King Francis, himself, ordered a search to be made, but it was without success. His enemies, if he perished—the victim of some treason—were very skilful, or very powerful. You have no father, and yet the tomb of Jacques de Montgomery is not among those of his ancestors, for he has never been found, dead, or living."

"Ah! it was not his son who sought for him," cried Gabriel. "Oh! nurse, why have you kept silence so long? Did you hide my birth from me because I have my father to avenge, or to save?"

"No; but because I wished to save you, yourself, monsieur. Do you know what were the last words of my husband, of the brave Pierrot Travigny, who was devoted to your house? 'Wife,' said he to me, some minutes before he drew his last breath, 'as soon as you have closed my eyes, quit Paris immediately, with the child. Go to Montgomery—not to the castle, but to the house that monseigneur was kind enough to give us, and there you must bring up our master's heir, without mystery, but quietly. Our good country people will respect, and not betray him. Hide his origin from himself, above all; he would show himself, and be ruined: let him know only, that he is noble,—that will preserve his dignity; then when age shall have made him prudent and grave, as his blood will make him brave and loyal,—when he shall be eighteen, tell him his name and his race. He can then judge for himself, what he should do, but take care until then; formidable enemies and invincible hatreds will pursue him, and those who have succeeded in seizing the eagle, would not spare his offspring.'"

"He died, monsieur, and I, faithful to his orders, took you, a poor orphan, not six years old, who had scarcely seen your father, and brought you here. The disappearance of the count was known, and it was suspected that powerful enemies would threaten whoever bore his name. They saw and doubtless recognised you in the village; but, by a tacit agreement, no one asked about you, or wondered at my silence. Not long after, my only son, your foster-brother, died; God seemed to wish that I should be entirely devoted to you—all pretended to believe that it was my son who had survived; but still they treated you with a touching respect and obedience. You already resembled your father, both in face and in disposition; the instinct of the lion

revealed itself in you—one could see that you were born chief and master. The children of the neighbourhood had already began to submit to your guidance—in all their plays you were at the head. The finest fruits, the tithe of the harvest, came unasked for to my house. Dom Jamet, Enquerrand, and all the servants at the Castle, gave you their services as a natural duty, and you accepted them as your right.

"You showed your race in everything," continued the nurse, "but these instincts and impulses only betrayed you to the faithful—you remained hidden and unknown to the malevolent, and you have arrived safely, at the age at which Pierrot authorised me to trust to your prudence. But you, ordinarily so grave and prudent, you see your first words were for vengeance and éclat."

"Vengeance, yes; éclat, no. You think then, Aloyse, that my poor father's enemies live still?"

"Monsieur, it is safest to presume so. If you went to court, quite unknown, except by your name, which would draw all regards upon you—brave, but inexperienced—strong in good intentions, and in the justness of your cause, but without friends, allies, or personal reputation; what would happen? Those who hate you, would know you, and you would not know them; they will strike you, and you will not know whence the blow comes. Not only your father will be unavenged, but you will be lost."

"That is precisely, Aloyse, why I regret not having had time to make myself friends and renown. Ah! if I had known two years ago! But never mind, it is but a delay, and I will make up for lost time. I will go to Paris, Aloyse, and without concealing that I am a Montgomery; but I will not say that I am the son of Count Jacques. There are plenty of titles and branches in our family, and it is sufficiently numerous for me to pass unrecognised. I will take the name of Viscomte Exmès, Aloyse, and that will be neither concealing nor betraying my proper character. Thanks to Enquerrand, I know the family history well.

To whom shall I address myself? to the Constable de Montmorency, that cruel repeater of paternosters? No! I believe you are right. To the Marshal de St. André? No, he is neither young nor enterprising enough? To François de Guise? Yes! he is the man. Montmédy, St. Dizier, Bologne, have already proved what he can do. I will go to him, and win my spurs, under his orders. Under the shade of his name, I will fight for my own."

"Monsieur will permit me to observe that the honest and good Elyot has had time to put large sums aside for the heir of his master: you can live like a prince, monsieur, and all the young men, your tenants, whom you have exercised so well in arms, will feel it both a duty and a pleasure to follow you to battle. It is your right to call them round you; you know that, monsieur."

"I will use it, Aloyse."

"Will monsieur receive, now, all his servants and dependants who burn with desire to congratulate him?"

"Not yet, good Aloyse. I must take a ride before anything."

"To Vimoutiers?" said Aloyse, smiling.

"Yes, perhaps. Do not I owe Enquerrand a visit and my thanks?"

"And with the compliments of Enquerrand, monseigneur will be very happy to receive those of a pretty little girl called Diana."

"Why," replied Gabriel, laughing, "this pretty little girl is my wife, and I have been her husband for the last three years, that is to say since she was nine years old."

Aloyse looked thoughtful. "Monsieur," said she, "if I did not know that in spite of your youth, you are grave and thoughtful, I would not say what I am about to say, but what might be play to others is a serious thing to you; remember, monsieur, we do not know whose daughter Diana is. One day, the wife of Enquerrand, who had himself gone to Fon-

tainbleau, with the Comte de Vimoutiers, his master, found, on entering her house, a child in a cradle, and a heavy purse of gold on the table. In the purse was a considerable sum of money, half of an engraved ring, and a paper containing the single word, 'Diana.' Bertha had no child, so she gladly accepted this charge; but she died soon, and on Enquerrand devolved the care of the little girl. He, and I, each with a similar charge, have exchanged cares; I have tried to make Diana good and pious; he has made you learned and adroit. Naturally you have known Diana, and naturally you have become attached to each other; but you are the Comte de Montgomery, declared so by authentic documents, and known to many, and no one has yet come to claim Diana. Take care, monsieur; I know she is only a child now; she will grow, however—and will be very beautiful, but her birth may never be known; and in that case you are too great to marry."

"But, nurse, I am about to leave her."

"True. Pardon the old Aloyse for her too great anxiety, and go to see, if you like, this charming child; but remember that you are impatiently waited for here."

"I will soon return. Embrace me again, dear Aloyse; call me ever your child, and receive a thousand thanks, my good nurse."

"Be ever blessed, my child and master."

CHAPTER II.

A BRIDE WHO PLAYS WITH HER DOLL.

Although Gabriel desired to go quickly, he soon began to let his horse take its own pace. Numerous feelings, some sad and some joyful, filled his mind. When he thought only that he was Comte de Mont-

gomery, his eyes sparkled, and he spurred on his horse; but soon the remembrance returned, "My father was killed, and has not been avenged;" and he allowed the bridle to fall from his hand. Then the thought that he was going to fight, to make a name for himself, raised his head proudly again; till again saddened by the thought that he must leave his little Diana, his old playmate. But he would return; he would have found the enemies of his father, and the parents of Diana.

When he arrived at the door, the joyful thoughts had decidedly gained the victory over the sad ones. Through the hedge which surrounded the garden, Gabriel could see among the trees the white dress of Diana. He cleared it with a bound, and was soon standing beside her, radiant and triumphant, but she was crying.

"What is it, dear little wife?" said Gabriel. "Whence comes this bitter grief? Has Enquerrand been scolding you for tearing your dress, or neglecting your lessons? or has your bullfinch been stolen? Tell your faithful knight, Diana; he is here to console you."

"Alas! Gabriel, you can no longer be my knight, and that is why I weep."

Gabriel thought that Enquerrand had been telling the little girl his rightful name and birth, and that it placed a barrier between them, so he said,—

"And what, Diana, be it good or bad fortune, do you think could ever make me renounce the title, which I am so proud to bear?"

But Diana did not appear to understand; and weeping more than ever, and hiding her face on Gabriel's breast, she sobbed out, "Gabriel! Gabriel! we must see each other no more."

"And who will prevent us?" cried he.

She raised her charming blond head, her blue eyes full of tears, and with a profound sigh. "Duty," she answered, with solemnity. Her pretty face had an expression, at once so unhappy and so comic, that

Gabriel could not help laughing, but he drew her towards him, and kissed her.

"Oh!" cried she, "mon Dieu! I am forbidden to allow that."

"What in the world has Enquerrand been saying to her?" thought Gabriel; but he said, "then you love me no longer, my darling?"

"I not love you!" cried she; "how can you think such a thing, Gabriel? You, who have always been so good to me—who carried me when I was tired—who helped me with my lessons. You, who screened my faults, and shared my punishments, when you could not prevent them. You, who have always been with me—who made me beautiful bouquets—who brought me birds'-nests. Oh, Gabriel! I shall never forget you; I never thought we should be separated; but that does not prevent it; and we are to meet no more."

"But why?"

She hung her head, and said, in a low voice, "Because I am the wife of another."

Gabriel laughed no more. His heart sank, and he said, in a troubled voice, "What do you mean, Diana?"

"I am now," replied she, "Madame la Duchesse de Castro, and my husband is called Horace Farnèse, Duc de Castro;" and the little girl smiled through her tears at the words, "Madame la Duchesse" and "husband." But her grief returned on seeing Gabriel's. He stood before her, pale and wild-looking.

"Is it a joke?" asked he.

"No, my poor Gabriel, it is a sad reality. Did you not meet Enquerrand? He went to Montgomery half an hour ago."

"I came over the hill," said Gabriel; "but finish."

"Oh, Gabriel! why did you stop away four days? It brought us misfortune. The day before yesterday I was uneasy. I had not seen you for two days, and I had made Enquerrand promise, that if you did not come the next day, he would take me to Montgo-

mery. Well, the next morning I slept rather late, so I dressed in haste, and was about to go down, when I heard a great noise under my window. I looked out, and saw before the door, cavaliers magnificently dressed, followed by squires, and behind them a gilded carriage. As I was looking, and wondering what it meant, Antoine knocked at my door, and said that Enquerrand wished me to come down immediately. I felt very frightened, but descended. The room was full of these gay gentlemen when I entered, and I was more frightened than ever. One of the grandest came towards me immediately, and giving me his hand, led me up to another gentleman, and said, 'Monseigneur le Duc de Castro, I have the honour of presenting to you your wife. Mademoiselle,' added he, turning to me, 'This is Horace Farnèse, Duc de Castro, your husband.'

"The duke smiled; but I, frightened and in despair, ran to Enquerrand, who was in one corner, and throwing myself into his arms, I cried, 'Enquerrand, this is not my husband; I will have no other husband than Gabriel; pray tell these gentlemen so!' The one who had presented me to the duke, frowned. 'What means this nonsense?' said he. 'Nothing, sir; only child's fancy,' replied Enquerrand, looking very pale. Then he whispered to me, 'Diana, you must obey your parents, who have sent to claim you.' 'Who are my parents?' asked I, aloud; 'it is to them that I wish to speak!' 'We come in their name, mademoiselle,' replied the gentleman; 'I am their representative. If you do not believe me, here is the order, signed by the king!' He presented to me a parchment, sealed with a red seal, and I saw at the top of the page, 'We, by the grace of God,' and at the bottom, 'Henri.'

"I was bewildered—thunderstruck—overwhelmed. Enquerrand abandoned me. The idea of my parents, the name of the king. You were not there, Gabriel; if you had been, I might have had courage to resist; but as it was, when the gentleman said, in an impe-

rious voice, 'Come, there has been enough delay; Madame de Leviston, I confide to your care Madame de Castro. We wait for her to go to the chapel,'—I permitted myself to be led, quite stupified."

"They took me to my room, aud then, taking from a box a white silk dress, Madame de Leviston and her women put it on me; then a pearl necklace and earrings. I cried all the time, but they only laughed at me. When I was dressed, they told me that I looked charming, but I cried all the more. We went down; and the same gentleman taking my hand again, led me to a litter, all gold and satin, and placed me in it.

"The Duc de Castro rode by my side, and we went to the chapel at Vimoutiers. The priest was at the altar; they said some words, which I did not understand, and put a ring on my finger. Then we came out again. They called me 'Madame la Duchesse,' and I was married, Gabriel."

Gabriel answered with a savage laugh.

"It was only when we came back," continued Diana, "that I recovered myself sufficiently to think of examining the husband that they had given to me. Ah, Gabriel, he is not so handsome as you; he is little, and in all his rich clothes he did not look so elegant as you; and then he looked haughty and impertinent. Add to this, that his hair and his beard were red, and you will see how I have been sacrificed. Soon he approached me, and taking my hand said, with a smile, 'Madame la Duchesse, pardon me that I am forced to leave you so soon; but you know, perhaps, that we are at war with Spain, and my presence is immediately required there. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you before very long at the court, whither you are going; I beg you to accept some presents which I leave for you. Au revoir, madame. Keep yourself gay and charming as suits your age; play and amuse yourself while I fight.' So saying, he kissed me on the forehead, and his long beard hurt me. Then all the ladies and gentle-

men bowed to me and went away, leaving me alone with Enquerrand.

"He had not understood much more of this adventure than I had. They had made him read the parchment containing the king's orders for my marriage. All that he knew more than I did was, that Madame de Leviston would soon come and fetch me and take me to court.

"When I went to my room I found in a great box —what do you think? a superb doll, with a complete trousseau of linen, and three dresses; white silk, red damask, and green brocade. Fancy, Gabriel, treating me like a child—it is shameful. However, the doll looks best in red, it has such a beautiful complexion, the little shoes are charming, but—"

"Yes, you are a child," interrupted Gabriel, sadly; "but never mind, you cannot help being only twelve years old. I have been wrong, however, to waste a sentiment so ardent and profound as mine, for I feel by my grief how much I love you. But if you had been strong, if you had found in yourself sufficient energy to resist an unjust order, we might have been happy, as you have recovered your parents, and they appear to be of good birth.

"I, also, Diana, came to tell you a secret which has been revealed to me to-day, but now it is useless —it is too late; your weakness has ruined all. All my life I feel that I shall remember you, Diana; and our young loves will occupy a large share in my heart. But you, Diana, in the éclat of the court, will soon forget all that you care for now."

"Never!" cried she, "and Gabriel, now that you are here, I feel brave. Shall I refuse to go when they come for me? Shall I insist on remaining with you?"

"Thanks, dear Diana; but henceforth, before God and man, you belong to another: we must go each our own way, you to the court and gaiety, and I to camps and battles. God grant that we may meet again some day."

"Oh, Gabriel! I must see you again. I shall love you always," cried the poor Diana, throwing herself weeping into his arms; but at that moment Enquerrand appeared, followed by Madame de Leviston.

"Here she is, madam," said he, pointing out Diana. "Ah, it is you, Gabriel, I was going to Montgomery to seek you, when I met Madame de Leviston, and was obliged to return."

"Yes, madam," said the lady to Diana, "the king is impatient to see you. We shall, if you please, set out in an hour; your preparations will not take long, I presume?"

Diana looked at Gabriel.

"Courage!" said he.

"I am glad to tell you," said Madame de Leviston, "that this good Enquerrand can join us to-morrow at Alençon, and accompany us to Paris if you desire it."

"Oh!" cried Diana, "I know no other father but him;" and she gave her hand to Enquerrand, who covered it with kisses, while she looked through her tears at Gabriel, who stood by looking sad, but firm.

"Come," said Madame de Leviston, "we must be at Caen before night."

Diana, then, suffocated with sobs, ran to her room, and in about an hour returned ready for her journey. She asked leave to go once more round the garden. Enquerrand and Gabriel followed her. She picked two roses, and putting one in her dress gave the other to Gabriel, and he felt, that at the same time, she slid a paper into his hand. Then she threw herself into his arms, and as he said, "Adieu," answered, "No, au revoir." When she was in the carriage, Gabriel heard her say, through her sobs, "Are you sure that they have put in my big doll?"

When they were gone, Gabriel opened his paper, and found in it a lock of hair. A month afterwards he arrived at Paris, and had himself announced at the Hotel Guise as the Vicomte d'Exmès.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAMP.

"Yes, gentlemen," said the Duc de Guise, as he entered his tent, "to-day, the 24th of April, 1557, we lay siege to Civitella. On the 1st of May we shall be masters of it, and shall go to besiege Aquila. Then we shall soon be at Capua, and afterwards, gentlemen, I hope to show you Naples, if it please God."

"And the pope, my dear brother;" interrupted the Duc d'Aumale, "his holiness, who had promised us the support of his troops, leaves us here reduced to our own resources; and it seems to me that our army is not strong enough to venture so far into the enemy's country."

"Paul the Second," said François, "has too much interest in our success to leave us without assistance. Biron, do you know if the partizans, whose rising in the Abruzzi the Carraffas promised us, are making a move?"

"No, monseigneur, they are quiet; I have certain and recent news."

"Our guns will awaken them," said the duke; "M. d'Elbœuf, have you heard anything of the provisions which we ought to have received at Ascoli?"

"No, monseigneur, and alas——"

"A delay, a simple delay," interrupted the duke; "and after all, we are not so very badly off. The taking of Campli has set us up a little, and I would wager that if I entered any of your tents in half an hour I should find a good supper served up, and perhaps at table with you some pretty widow or orphan from Campli whom you have undertaken to console."

The gentlemen laughed as they retired; but once alone, the duke buried his face in his hands, and remained in thought. Shortly after, hearing steps behind him, he turned round with an angry expression at the intruder, which, however, instantly vanished when he saw who it was, and holding out his hand he said, "Dear Gabriel, *you* will not hesitate to advance because bread is scarce, and the enemy numerous? You, who went the last out of Metz, and entered the first into Campli. But do you come to announce any news?"

"Yes, monseigneur, a courier from France bearing, I think, letters from your illustrious brother, Monseigneur le Cardinal de Lorraine."

"Will you fetch them for me, yourself?"

Gabriel went out, and soon returned, bearing a packet, sealed with the arms of Lorraine. Six years had but little changed our friend Gabriel; he looked more manly, it is true, but he preserved unaltered the same pure and grave expression—the same frank and honest look—and, let us add, the same heart, full of youth and of illusions. Le Duc de Guise was thirty-seven, and although of a great and generous nature, he had in the battle of life lost many a youthful feeling and enthusiasm, but he still comprehended and loved the chivalric and devoted character of Gabriel. An irresistible sympathy drew him towards the young man.

He asked him to open and read him the letter, but Gabriel, after throwing a glance over it, returned it to him, saying, "Pardon, monseigneur, but this letter is written in some strange character which I cannot read."

"Oh, it is a confidential letter, then," said the duke, and taking from a box a paper containing the key to the cipher, and handing it to Gabriel, said, "Now, read."

Gabriel still hesitated, but the duke, pressing his hand warmly, said again, "Read, my friend."

Gabriel read, "'Monsieur, my very honoured and

illustrious brother (when shall I be able to call you in one word, sire?).'" Gabriel stopped again.

The duke smiled. "You are astonished, Gabriel, but I trust that you do not suspect me. Le Duc de Guise is no Constable de Bourbon. May God preserve to our king his crown and his life. But is there in the world no other crown except that of France? As chance has put you in our confidence, I will hide nothing from you; you shall enter into all my designs and my dreams. The duke rose and walked up and down the tent as he spoke.

"Our house, Gabriel," continued he, "may, I think, aspire to any greatness: our sister is Queen of Scotland—our niece, Marie Stuart, is about to wed the Dauphin. Our nephew, the Duke of Lorraine, is the chosen son-in-law of the king. Then we have claims upon Florence and Naples; let us content ourselves with Naples for the present. Would not this crown be better on the head of a Frenchman, than of a Spaniard? We are allied to the Duke of Ferrara, and united with the Carraffas; Paul the Fourth is old—my brother, the cardinal, will succeed him; the throne of Naples is tottering, and I mount it. The dream is splendid, but I begin to fear that it is only a dream. Gabriel, I had not 12,000 men with me, when I crossed the Alps, but the Duke of Ferrara had promised me 7000, which he now keeps at home. Paul the Fourth and the Carraffas had boasted that they could raise in Naples a powerful faction, and they engaged to furnish soldiers, money, and provisions—they have not sent a man, a waggon or a crown; but in spite of all, I will persevere. I will not quit this promised land till the last extremity, and if I am forced to retreat, I shall return."

"Monseigneur," said Gabriel, "how proud I am, to bear even so small a part in your glorious ambitions."

"And now," continued the duke, "having twice given you the key to my brother's letter, I think you can read and understand it. Go on then, I listen."

"'Sire,' that was where I stopped," said Gabriel. "'I have to announce to you two pieces of bad news, and one good. The good news is, that the marriage of our niece, Marie Stuart, is decidedly fixed for the 20th of next month, and will be solemnised in Paris on that day. One of the others comes from England. Philip the Second of Spain is there, and is exciting his wife, Mary Tudor, who obeys him so lovingly, to declare war against France. They speak already of an army on the frontiers of the Pays Bas, and of which the Duke Philibert Emanuel of Savoy will have the command. Then, my dear brother, in the scarcity of men here, the king will certainly recall you from Italy, and our plans there will be, at least, adjourned; but remember, François, that it is better to defer them, than to lose them altogether; so no rashness.'"

"Yes," interrupted the duke, striking the table, violently with his fist, "my brother is but too much in the right; Mary, the prude, will certainly obey her husband, and I certainly will not disobey the king, openly, when he recalls his soldiers: so there is a new obstacle to this cursed enterprise, for it is cursed, in spite of the benediction of the pope. Is it not, Gabriel? Tell me truly, do you not think it desperate?"

"I would not wish, monseigneur, to be among those whom you say discourage you, but if you appeal to my frankness——"

"I understand you, Gabriel, I am forced to agree with you. It is not on this occasion that we shall do great things together, but it is only delayed for a time, I swear. Continue, Gabriel, we have still more bad news to hear, if I remember rightly."

Gabriel went on. "'The other unlucky affair, of which I have to tell you, is of a more private, but not less disagreeable nature. Since your departure, M. de Montmorency is not less jealous and bitter against you than before, and never ceases to grumble at the goodness of the king to our house. The approaching

marriage of our niece with the dauphin does not at all please him, and doubtless it disturbs the equilibrium which the king has endeavoured to preserve between the houses of Guise and Montmorency. The old constable loudly demands an equivalent, and has at last found one, which is the marriage of his son François with——' " Gabriel did not finish, his voice failed him, and a deadly pallor covered his face.

"What is the matter, Gabriel?" cried the duke.

"Nothing; monseigneur—a sudden giddiness. I will proceed; where was I? 'The marriage of his son, François, with Madame de Castro, daughter of the king and Diana de Poitiers. You remember that she, a widow at thirteen, her husband having been killed at the siege of Hesdin, has been for five years at the convent of the Filles Dieu, in Paris. The king, at the solicitation of the constable, has just recalled her to the court, and let me tell you, brother, that she is a pearl of beauty, and you know that I am a good judge. Her grace has won all hearts, and above all, her father's; he had before given her the Duchy of Chatellerault, and now has added that of Angoulême. She has scarcely been here a fortnight, but her ascendancy over him is immense.'

"'Indeed, her mother, who, for some unknown reason, does not openly acknowledge her, seems almost jealous of the new power. It would be good for the constable, for you know, between ourselves, that Diana de Poitiers can refuse nothing to the old rascal. This cursed marriage is therefore but too likely to come off.' "

"You seem faint, again, Gabriel," interrupted the duke, "go, and rest, while I finish this letter, which interests me deeply, for it would be a dangerous advantage for the constable. I thought that his booby of a son was affianced; let me read——"

"I am really quite well, and quite able to finish;" and he went on—"'there is only one chance for us; François de Montmorency is secretly married to

Mademoiselle de Fiennes, and a divorce will be necessary, which François is going to Rome to solicit from the pope. Let it be your business, therefore, my dear brother, to be beforehand with him, and endeavour, through your own influence, and that of the Carraffas, to make his holiness reject this request, which will be, I warn you, supported by a letter from the king. Defend your position as well as you did St. Dizier and Metz; and I, on my side, will exert myself to the utmost, for, on my faith, it is necessary. I pray God, brother, to give you a long and happy life. Your brother, G. Cardinal de Lorraine. From Paris. 12th April, 1557.'"

"Come, nothing is yet lost," said the duke, when Gabriel had finished, "and the pope, who refuses me soldiers, may at least make me a present of a bull."

"Thus," replied Gabriel, trembling, "you hope that his holiness will not grant this divorce from Jeanne de Fiennes?"

"Yes, I hope so. But how you are moved, my friend. Dear Gabriel, you enter into our interests with warmth. But now let us speak of yourself, and as, in this unlucky expedition, you will hardly have an opportunity of adding to the eminent services that I owe you, let me begin to pay my debt. What can I do for you? Can I not be useful to you, in any way? Come, speak frankly."

"Oh! monseigneur is too good, and I do not see——"

"Five years," interrupted the duke, "you have fought heroically for me, and have never accepted a farthing from me. You must want money—Diable! Every one always wants money. It would be neither a gift nor a loan, but a debt; so, no scruples, and although we are not too well off——"

"I know that, monseigneur, and I have so little need of money, that I wished to offer you some thousands of crowns, which might serve the army, and which really are very useless to me."

"And which I will receive willingly, for they will come very à propos I must admit. But can I then do nothing for you, O man, without desires? Do you want titles?"

"Thanks, no; monseigneur; what I covet is personal glory, and not vague honours. Thus, since you presume that there is little more to be done here, it would be a great gratification to me, to be sent to Paris, to carry to the king, for the marriage of your niece, the flags that you have taken in Lombardy and in the Abruzzi; and it would crown my wishes, if a letter from you to his majesty, deigned to attest that some of them were taken by me, and not altogether without danger."

"Well, that is easy, and yet more, it is just; I should regret this parting, but that it probably will not be for long, for if war breaks out in Flanders, as appears very probable, I presume I shall see you there?"

"I shall be only too happy to follow you there, monseigneur."

"Well, then, when will you set out?"

"The sooner the better, I think, monseigneur, if the marriage is to take place on the 20th of May."

"True. Then go to-morrow; and now retire to rest, and I will write the letter to the king, and also an answer to my brother, to tell him that I hope to succeed with the pope."

"And, perhaps, monseigneur, my presence in Paris may contribute to the success of your wishes, on the point you have at heart."

"Always mysterious, Vicomte Exmès, but I am accustomed to it from you. Adieu! I wish you a good-night."

"I will come to-morrow morning for my letters, monseigneur. I will leave my men with you, they may be useful; I only ask permission to take with me my squire, Martin Guerre; he is devoted to me, and is a brave soldier, who is afraid of nothing but his wife and his shadow."

"How so?" asked the duke, laughing.

"Monseigneur, he escaped from home to get away from his wife, and entered my service at Metz: but the devil, or his wife, to punish him, took the form of another Martin Guerre, and he saw, fighting at his side a striking likeness of himself. Dame! that frightens him, but, away from it, he mocks at balls, and is a host in himself; he has saved my life twice."

"Take, then, with you this valiant coward, and come to me early to-morrow, my friend, my letters will be ready."

Gabriel slept little; and, after receiving the last instructions and adieus of the duke, set off, at six in the morning, on the 25th of April, accompanied by Martin Guerre, for Rome, and from thence to Paris.

CHAPTER IV.

DIANA DE POITIERS.

It is the 20th of May in Paris, at the Louvre, and in the apartment of Madame de Brèzè, Duchesse de Valentinois, commonly called Diana of Poitiers. Nine o'clock in the morning had just struck, and Diana, dressed entirely in white, in a coquettish negligé, reclined on a velvet sofa. The king, Henry the Second, magnificently dressed, sat by her side.

The room was resplendent with all the luxury with which that epoch of art, that we call Renaissance, could decorate a royal apartment. In the paintings which hung on the walls, Diana the huntress, goddess of the woods and forests, was the heroine; and gilded and coloured medallions and panels bore everywhere the arms of Henry the Second,

Let us now turn our eyes to the king. He was tall and active, and a man of great strength. He combated, by regular diet and exercise, a tendency to embonpoint, and surpassed the swiftest in the chase, the strongest at the tournay. He had a dark complexion, with black hair, and a full and black beard. This day, as usual, he wore the colours of Diana, green satin, slashed with white, and glittering with gold embroideries; a hat, with a white plume, sparkling with pearls and diamonds, a double gold chain, supporting a medallion of the Order of St. Michael, a sword engraved by Benvenuto, a white collar in Venice point-lace, and a mantle of velvet, starred with gold. The costume was splendid, and the wearer elegant.

Diana was dressed in a simple white peignoir of a transparent material. To paint herself would be a difficult task—the lilies and roses of her complexion, or the graces of her form, which surpassed the most beautiful statue. Her age it was impossible to guess, but the youngest always looked faded beside her. She was worthy of the love of a king, and had been, for two-and-twenty years, the well and only beloved of Henry the Second.

"Now, sire," cried she, starting up; "it is time for me to prepare for the wedding; you are already dressed, but I am not."

"Yes," replied he, "I have a rendezvous for ten o'clock."

"A rendezvouz, sire! With a woman?"

"Yes."

"And pretty, doubtless?"

"Yes, Diana, very pretty.'

"Then it is not the queen."

"Well, Catherine de Medicis has her own kind of cold beauty; however, it is not with her. Can you not guess with whom?"

"No really, sire."

"It is another Diana, our daughter—our dear daughter!"

"You repeat that too loudly, and too often, sire," replied Diana. "You forget that we agreed that Madame de Castro should pass for the daughter of another."

"But you love her all the same, do you not, Diana?"

"I love her because you do."

"Oh, yes! very much. She is so charming and so good; besides, she recalls to me my youthful days when I loved you—not better than I do now, but madly, even to crime."

The king remained for a few minutes plunged in thought, and then said, "That Montgomery—you did not love him, did you, Diana?"

"What a question," replied she, with a smile of disdain. "After twenty years, again this jealousy."

"Yes, I shall be always jealous of you, Diana. But if you did not love him he loved you."

"What mattered that, sire, while my heart was all yours. Besides, he has been dead so long."

"Yes, dead," replied the king in a hollow voice.

"Do not let us sadden a fête day with these souvenirs. Have you seen François and Marie this morning? They are very happy and joyful, but scarcely more so than the Guises, whom this marriage delights."

"Yes, and it equally enrages the constable, my old Montmorency. He will be more enraged soon, however, for I fear that our Diana will not have his son."

"But, sire, you have promised for her."

"Yes, but it appears that Diana is averse to it."

"A child of eighteen! What reason can she have?"

"That is what she is about to confide to me."

"Go to her, then, sire, while I adorn myself to please you."

"After the ceremony, I shall see you again; but, before I go, tell me once more that you love me"

"Yes, sire, as I always have, and always shall love you!"

"Adieu! then, my loved and loving Diana."

Immediately on the departure of the king, a panel, which was concealed by the tapestry, opened on the opposite side of the room, and the Constable de Montmorency entered. "Mon Dieu!" said he, rudely, "you have talked enough to-day, I hope."

"My friend," replied Diana, "you saw that long ago, I tried to dismiss him."

"If you imagine that your discourse was edifying or amusing to me—but what is this new whim of refusing the hand of your daughter to my son, after it has been solemnly promised? I tell you that this marriage must take place. Do you hear, Diana? You must arrange it. It is the only way to prevent those cursed Guises becoming too powerful: therefore in spite of the king, or the pope, I will have it."

"But, my friend."

"Ah!" cried the constable, "when I tell you that I will have it."

"Then it shall be so," replied Diana, frightened.

CHAPTER V.

DIANA DE CASTRO.

Diana de Castro, whom we saw as a child, was now nearly eighteen; her beauty had kept all its promise, and her features were at once regular and charming. She was but thirteen when the Duc de Castro, whom she had never seen again, was killed at the siege of Hesdin. The king then sent her to the convent of the Filles Dieu, at Paris, and she soon became so attached to the nuns, that she had requested permission to remain there.

"Well," said Henri to her, on entering, "I am ready to listen to you, ma mignonne."

"Sire, you are so good."

"I love you, my child, and I wish to please you as far as I may, without risking those grave interests which a king must consider, before all affection. And stay, to prove this to you, the good sister, Monigne, who took so much care of you at the convent, has just been, by your recommendation, appointed abbess of the Convent of Origny, at St. Quintin."

"Oh! I thank you, sire."

"Here are, also, the letters patent which confer on you the title of Duchesse d'Angoulême. But I see you sometimes sorrowful and thoughtful, and I wish to know how to cheer you; are you not happy, my child?"

"Ah! sire," replied Diana, "how could I not be so, surrounded by your affection and your benefits. I only ask that the present should continue."

"Diana, you know that I recalled you from the convent to marry you to François de Montmorency; it would be an alliance worthy of you, and would, moreover, have been useful to my interests, yet you seem averse to it. You owe me, at least, the reasons for this dislike, which grieves me, Diana."

"I will not hide them from you, my father. In the first place, they tell me, that François de Montmorency is already privately married to one of the ladies of the court."

"It is true; but this marriage, contracted clandestinely, without my consent, or that of the constable, is worthless; and if the pope pronounce a divorce, you surely need not be more scrupulous than his holiness; so if that be the reason ——"

"No, I have another,—my father."

"And what other objection do you find to an alliance, which would honour the richest and noblest heiress in France?"

"Well, my father, because I love some one," cried

Diana, throwing herself, confused, and tearful, into his arms.

"You love! Diana; and whom?"

"Gabriel, sire."

"Gabriel, what?" asked the king, laughing.

"I do not know."

"How! Diana. Pray explain yourself."

"Sire, I will tell you all. He was my childhood's love—I saw him every day. He was so gentle, so brave, so handsome, so clever, and so tender. He used to call me his little wife. Ah! sire, do not laugh; it was a serious and holy affection, the first which was engraven on my heart: others have been added to it, but none can efface that. I permitted myself to be married to le Duc de Castro, but I knew not what I did—I only obeyed like a little girl. Since then, I have felt my treason towards Gabriel.

"Poor Gabriel," continued Diana, "when he left me, he did not cry—but what profound grief in his look! All returned to my mind during the solitary years that I passed at the convent, so that I have lived twice over the years passed with Gabriel; and, returning here, sire, to your court, among the accomplished gentlemen who surround you, I have not seen one who can rival Gabriel; and it is certainly not François, the submissive son of the haughty constable, who can make me forget the gentle, yet proud, companion of my infancy. Thus, now that I am of an age to understand, as long as you allow me, my father, I will remain faithful to Gabriel."

"Have you then seen him again, since you left Vimoutiers, Diana?"

"Alas! no."

"But you have heard of him?"

"No. I only heard from Enquerrand that he left the country soon after me, and told Aloyse, his nurse, not to be unquiet about him—that he would return to her famous."

"And have not his family heard of him?"

"Sire, he had no family. I never saw any one

with him but Aloyse, when I went to visit him at Montgomery."

"At Montgomery!" cried the king, turning pale "I trust that he is not a Montgomery. Tell me that he is not."

"Oh! no, sire; if he had, he would have lived in the castle, and he lived in the cottage of Aloyse. "But what have these Counts of Montgomery done to you, to move you so, sire? Are they your enemies? They speak of them all through the country with veneration."

"Ah! truly," replied the king, with a disdainful laugh, "but they have done nothing to me. What could a Montgomery do to a Valois? But this Gabriel—had he then no other name?"

"None that I know of, sire; he was an orphan, and I never heard his father spoken of."

"And you have no other reason to object to this alliance than your old affection for this young man?"

"That is enough."

"Well, Diana; I would not attempt to combat it, if he were here, and I could know him; although I fear that his origin——"

"Have I not also a bar in my scutcheon?"

"But, at least, you have a scutcheon, and one that noble houses desire to mingle with their own. Your Gabriel, on the contrary—but that is not now the question. You have not seen him for six years, he has probably forgotten you—he loves some one else, perhaps."

"Sire, you do not know Gabriel; he had a faithful heart."

"Well, Diana, perhaps infidelity to you is scarcely likely; but you think he went to fight, probably he has fallen. I afflict you, my child, and your beautiful eyes fill with tears. Well, I am not much accustomed to believe in great attachments, but I respect yours. Still, ma mignonne, for a childish love, whose object has disappeared—for a remembrance—a shadow, see into what embarrassment your refusal will throw me,

The constable, if I withdraw my word, will grow angry, and perhaps leave me; and then, it is no longer I who reign, but the Guises. See Diana—the duke has under his hand the whole military force in France—the cardinal, all the finances; a third brother, all my ships at Marseilles; a fourth commands in Scotland; and a fifth is going to replace Brissac in Piedmont. I speak gently to you, Diana, and explain my circumstances; I beg, when I might command, but I love much better to let you judge for yourself; I prefer that you should yield to the father, and not to the king. You are good and affectionate, this marriage would save me, it gives to the Montmorencies the power, which it withdraws from the Guises, and equalizes the balance once more.

"Well, you do not reply; will you be deaf to the prayer of your father, who does not constrain you, but only asks you to render him the first service which you have ever had it in your power to grant, and which will, moreover, contribute to your own honour and happiness? Well, my daughter; will you consent?"

"Sire," replied she, "you are a thousand times more powerful, when your voice implores, than when it commands. I am ready to sacrifice myself to your interests on one condition."

"What is it, spoiled child?"

"This marriage shall not take place for three months, and meanwhile I will send to Aloyse, for news of Gabriel, so that if he be dead I shall learn it, and if he be alive, I can, at least, claim back my promise."

"Granted, willingly!" exclaimed Henri, joyfully, "and I will aid you in the search; and in three months, you will marry François, whether your young lover be living or dead."

"And now," said Diana, sadly, "I do not know whether I ought to wish most for his death, or his life."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSTABLE DE MONTMORENCY.

On the afternoon of the same day the Constable de Montmorency was at the Louvre, in the cabinet of Diana of Poitiers, examining one of his secret agents. The spy was of middle height, and dark in complexion, with black hair and eyes; and he resembled, in a most striking manner, Martin Guerre, the faithful squire of Gabriel—they looked like twins.

"What have you done with the courier, Arnold?" asked the constable.

"Monseigneur, it was necessary to put him out of the way, but it was in the night, in the forest of Fontainbleau; they will lay the murder to robbers. I am prudent."

"Nevertheless, it is a serious thing, and I blame you for being so prompt with your knife."

"I am always ready to do anything in the service of monseigneur."

"Yes; but once for all, Arnold, remember, that if you let yourself be taken, I shall let you be hung."

"Be easy, monseigneur; I am a man of precautions."

"Now let me see the letter."

"Here it is, monseigneur."

"Open it, then, without breaking the seal. Diable! do you suppose that I can read?"

Arnold du Thill, taking from his pocket a sharp pair of scissors, cut carefully round the seal, and opened the letter. He first pointed to the signature. "Monseigneur sees that I do not deceive him. The letter, addressed to the Cardinal de Guise, is from Cardinal Carraffa, as the miserable courier had the folly to tell me."

"Read it then, at once."

Arnold read,—"'Monseigneur, and dear ally, only three important words. Firstly, according to your request, the pope will linger over the affair of the divorce, and will dally with François de Montmorency, who arrived here yesterday, only to refuse him at last.'"

"Paternoster!" murmured the constable; "may the devil take all these red robes."

"'Secondly,'" continued Arnold, "'M. de Guise, your illustrious brother, after having taken Campli, holds Civitella in check; but to decide us to send him the men and supplies he asks for, we must be assured that you will not recall him for the war in Flanders, as report goes, you will do. If we have a certainty that he is to remain, his holiness will aid him efficaciously. Thirdly, I announce to you, monseigneur, the approaching arrival in Paris of an envoy from your brother, the Vicomte Exmès, bringing to the king the colours taken in Italy. He will doubtless arrive nearly as soon as my letter; and his presence, and the glorious spoils which he will lay at the feet of the king, will assuredly be of service to your cause.'"

"Fiat voluntas tua," cried the constable, furiously. "We will give a worthy reception to this cursed ambassador. Arnold, is that devil of a letter finished?"

"Yes, monseigneur, except the compliments and the signature."

"Well, you will have plenty to do."

"I ask no better, monseigneur, with a little money to help me."

"Drôle, here are a hundred ducats; with you, one must always have money ready."

"I spend so much in the service of monseigneur."

"Your vices cost more than my service."

"Oh, monseigneur deceives himself about me. My dream would be to live calm, happy, and rich, in some country place, surrounded by my wife and my children, like a good father of a family."

"Quite virtuous and pastoral. Well, amend your

ways—lay aside some money—marry if you can—realise your plans of happiness—who prevents you? But meanwhile reclose the letter, and take it to the cardinal; you will disguise yourself—you understand—and say that you were charged by your dying companion——"

"Monseigneur may trust to me. All shall be more probable than truth itself."

"Who comes here?" cried the constable.

"Pardon me, monseigneur," said a servant, entering; "but here is a gentleman arrived from Italy, who asks to see the king, on the part of the Duc de Guise, and I thought I had better tell you; he is called the Vicomte Exmès."

"You have done well, Guillaume. Show him in here; and you, Arnold, place yourself behind that tapestry, and do not lose the occasion of seeing this man; it is principally for that that I receive him."

"I believe, monseigneur, that I have seen him already in my travels, but it is good to make sure."

The spy glided behind the tapestry, and Gabriel was introduced. "To whom," said he, bowing, "have I the honour of speaking?"

"I am the Constable de Montmorency. Monsieur, what do you desire?"

"I beg your pardon; it is to the king that I wish to speak."

"His majesty is not in the Louvre, and in his absence——"

"I will go to his majesty, or wait for him," interrupted Gabriel.

"His majesty is at the fêtes of Tournelles, and will not return before the evening. Are you ignorant that to-day they celebrate the marriage of the dauphin?"

"No, monseigneur; I heard it as I came along Can I see the Cardinal de Lorraine? It was for him I asked, and I know not why they brought me to you."

"M. de Lorraine," said the constable, "being a

man of peace, loves the mockery of war. I, who am a man of war, love only real combats; that is why I am at the Louvre, while he is at the Tournelles."

"I will go to him there."

"You come from Italy?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"From the Duc de Guise, perhaps? What is he doing?"

"Permit me, monseigneur, to lay my account before his majesty in the first instance, and to leave you for that purpose."

"Paternoster!" cried the constable; "he shall pay for these insolent airs. Hola, Arnold! Well, where is the fellow? Gone also—save and confound him."

While the constable vented his ill-humour in oaths and paternosters, according to custom, Gabriel, in traversing a gallery to quit the Louvre, found, to his astonishment, standing near the door, his squire Martin Guerre, whom he had ordered to wait in the court. "Oh! it is you, Martin!" said he. "Well, go with the flags carefully rolled up, and wait for me at the corner of the Rue St. Catherine. The cardinal may wish me to present them to the king at the fêtes."

"Yes, monsieur;" and he ran quickly down-stairs. Thus Gabriel, on coming into the court, was much surprised to find him still standing there, looking white and scared.

"Well, Martin, what is the matter?"

"Ah, monsieur, I have just seen him; he passed close by me just now, and spoke to me."

"Who?"

"Who! Satan, I think. The phantom—the other Martin Guerre."

"Again this folly, Martin! you are dreaming."

"No, no! he spoke to me, I tell you. He stopped before me, and petrified me with his glance, saying, with his infernal laugh, 'Well, we are still in the service of Vicomte Exmès,' (remark the 'we,' monsieur), 'and we are bringing back the flags won

by M. de Guise.' How could he know that, monsieur? Then he heard the sound of your steps, and saying, 'We shall meet again, Martin Guerre,' he disappeared through the door, or rather through the wall."

"You are mad! he could hardly have had time to speak, since you left me in the gallery."

"I! monseigneur. I have not stirred from the place where you left me"

"To whom, then, did I speak just now?"

"Assuredly to the other—to my double—my spectre."

"My poor Martin, you are ill; we have marched too long in the sun."

"Yes, you think that I am delirious, I know, but I do not know a word of the orders that you say you gave to me."

"You have forgotten them, Martin; well, I will repeat them. I told you to go with the flags, and wait for me at the corner of the Rue St. Catherine. Do you remember now?"

"Pardon, monsieur; I cannot remember what I never knew."

"Well, you know it now—go quickly."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TILT-YARD.

THE tilt-yard had been prepared across the Rue St. Antoine, and formed a square, surrounded on each side by scaffolds covered with spectators, while at one end sat the king and queen. At the opposite end was the entrance for the combatants. About three o'clock in the afternoon, when the religious ceremony, and the repast which followed it, were

over, the king and queen took their places amidst vivats and exclamations of joy from all sides.

Then the king ordered that the tilting at the ring should commence. This game was, in those days, complicated and difficult; the post on which the ring was hung, was placed about two thirds from the entrance of the course, which it was necessary to traverse at full gallop, and in passing to bear away the ring on the point of the lance. The lance was not to touch the body, but to be held horizontally, with the elbow above the head. The prize was a diamond ring, given by the queen.

Henri, on his white horse, caparisoned with velvet and gold, was one of the most elegant and skilful cavaliers that it was possible to imagine. He held and managed his lance with admirable grace and certainty. However, M. de Vieilleville rivalled him, and even seemed about to obtain the prize; he had two rings more than the king, and there remained but three to be taken. But M. de Vieilleville, a perfect courtier, missed them all, and the king had the prize. On receiving it, he cast a glance towards Diana of Poitiers, but it was the queen's gift, and he felt bound to offer it to the newly-made bride.

Other games succeeded, and the king won a magnificent bracelet: he went and seated himself near Diana, and publicly placed it on her arm. The queen grew pale with rage; but according to her usual custom, pretended to see nothing, and began to talk to her ladies. Several gentlemen then asked to be permitted to break a lance in honour of the ladies, which was readily granted.

Henri, taking a gold chain from his neck, offered it for a prize, adding, "Do your best, gentlemen, for I shall endeavour to regain it; at six o'clock the combats will finish, and the victor, whoever he be, will be crowned."

Several gentlemen held the ground alternately, but at last the Marshal d'Amville took his place, and kept it against five successive lances. The king could

refrain no longer, "Oh," said he, "M. d'Amville, I will see if you are fixed there for ever." He armed, and at the first course, M. d'Amville was unhorsed After him came M. Aussun, but when he, in his turn, was beaten, no other presented himself.

"How is this, gentlemen?" cried the king; "will no one tilt against me? No one fears, I trust; there is no king here, but the victor: no privileges, but those of skill; therefore come forward boldly, gentlemen."

Still no one came. All feared equally to be victor or vanquished, and the king was growing angry and impatient, when at last a new assailant passed the barrier. Henri, without looking to see who it was, advanced; the two lances broke, but the king tottered on his saddle—by which he was obliged to support himself, while the other remained motionless. At this moment, six o'clock struck, and the king was vanquished. He descended joyfully from his saddle, and taking the victor by the hand, led him himself up to the queen. To his surprise, he saw a face which was perfectly unknown to him. He was a handsome young man—and the queen smiled as she put the chain round his neck. He, after bowing, rose, and going straight up to Madame de Castro, offered her the chain, while Gabriel and Diana burst from their lips, but so low, that no one heard them, and it passed for a courtesy to the beautiful daughter of the king.

The king also took it as such, and thanked him for it, adding, "I, sir, who am well acquainted with my nobility, do not remember having seen you before, but I wish much to know the name of a cavalier who gave me just now so rude a shock."

"Sire, it is the first time that I have had the honour of being in your majesty's presence. I have been, until now, with the army, and have just arrived from Italy; I am the Vicomte Exmès." Then making a sign to two men, who stood near, they advanced, and laid the flags at the feet of the king. "Sire," continued

Gabriel, "here are the flags won in Italy by your army, and sent to you by Monseigneur le Duc de Guise. His eminence the Cardinal de Lorraine assures me that your majesty will excuse their presentation, at what is, perhaps, an inopportune time. I have also the honour, sire, to place in your hands these letters from the duke."

The king took the letters, and reading them, said, "Thanks, M. d'Exmès, these letters recommend you to us—and what do I see? that you took four of these flags with your own hand, and our cousin of Guise calls you one of his bravest captains. What can I do for you, M. d'Exmès?"

"Sire, you overwhelm me; I trust myself to your majesty's goodness."

"You are a captain; would it please you to enter our guards? I was embarrassed for a successor to M. d'Avallon, and I see that you would be a worthy one."

"Your majesty——"

"You accept; that is settled. We are now going to return to the Louvre, when you can give me more details of the war."

Gabriel bowed. The king gave the order for departure, and the crowd dispersed, with cries of "Vive le Roi."

Diana drew near Gabriel for an instant and said in a low voice, "To-morrow, at the queen's circle." Then she vanished, leaving to her old friend a heart full of sweet hope.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRISON.

The queen's circle usually assembled in the evening: Gabriel was informed that his new appointment as captain of the guard, not only authorised, but re-

quired him to attend them. His only regret then, was, that he had twenty-four hours to wait for it. His first occupation was to go with Martin Guerre to seek for a lodging. He took one, rather splendid for a young captain, but consistent with his means, and went to bed, happy and content. He had done much alone, and with no support but his sword, and no recommendation but his courage: he had attained an eminent rank, and no little glory, and could now go boldly forward in pursuit of her whom he loved, and of those whom he ought to hate.

The one, he had found; the other, Aloyse should help him to trace—he would send for her.

Gabriel's duty on the following day was to visit the prisons in Paris, a duty which would fall to him once a month. He began with the Bastile, and finished with the Châtelet. The governor gave him the list of the prisoners, pointing out any who were dead, released, or transferred, and he had to visit all who remained.

He thought he had finished his task, when the governor turned to another page, on which was written—"No. 21. Secret prisoner. If during the visit of the governor, or the captain of the guard, he attempts to speak, transfer him into a lower and worse dungeon."

"Who is this important prisoner?" asked Gabriel of M. de Salvoison, the governor of the Châtelet.

"No one knows," replied he; "I received him from my predecessor, as he from his. You see that the date of his entrance is left blank; it must have been in the reign of Francis the First. They tell me that he has twice tried to speak; but at the first word, the governor is bound under the most terrible penalties to shut the door of his prison, and then to have him moved into a worse dungeon.

"This has been done, and there now only remains one lower, which would be certain death. Doubtless they wished to bring him to that, but he keeps silence; he is always chained, and to prevent any possibility of an escape, a jailor enters his cell every five minutes.

"But if he spoke to this jailor?"

"Oh, he is deaf and dumb; he was born in the Châtelet, and has never been out of it."

Gabriel shuddered. This man, so completely separated from life, yet who still lived and thought, inspired him with profound pity—almost with horror. "What idea or what remorse; what fear of hell, or faith in heaven," thought he, "could prevent this miserable being from dashing his head against the walls of his cell? Was it vengeance, or hope, which chained him to life?"

His heart beat fast as he descended to the cell; they traversed several black and damp staircases—several horrible vaults, and then stopping before an iron door, the governor said, "It is here," and opened it with his key. Then Gabriel saw a frightful picture, such as one might see in a fearful nightmare. Everywhere stone, black, mossy, and damp; for this wretched place was lower than the bed of the Seine, and in the high tides, the water half filled it. Horrible reptiles crawled over the walls, and there was no sound save the regular dropping of water from the roof.

Here lived two human beings, one guarding the other; both mute, and seeming scarce alive. The jailor three parts an idiot, but a giant in strength, stood against the wall, looking with a vacant eye at the prisoner, who was lying in a corner on his bed of straw; his hands and feet secured by a chain, which was fastened to the wall. He was an old man, with white hair and beard.

When they entered, he seemed to sleep, and did not move: you might have taken him for a corpse, or a statue. But all at once he sat upright, opened his eyes, and looked at Gabriel. He was forbidden to speak, but his terrible look spoke for him. The governor visited every corner of the cell, while Gabriel remained stationary, looking as fascinated by those flaming eyes, while the sincerest pity filled his breast. The prisoner appeared also to contemplate his visitor with anything but indifference. Indeed, once he

opened his mouth, as if about to speak, but the governor, turning round, recalled to him his threatened fate, and with a bitter smile he reclosed his eyes, and fell back into his stony immobility.

"Oh! let us go!" cried Gabriel, "this is dreadful."

They regained the open air, but Gabriel could not banish from his mind this sombre image until, the appointed time arriving, it was chased away by that of the blooming young girl.

CHAPTER IX.

DURING THE COMEDY.

THREE times at least during the week, the king and all the lords and ladies of the court met in the evening in the apartment of the queen. There they planned or talked over the events of the day in all liberty, sometimes with all licence; and amidst the general conversation many a private one found a place. "And finding there," says Brantôme, "a troop of human goddesses, each lord and gentleman conversed with her whom he loved best." Often, again, there was dancing or acting.

It was at one of these réunions that Gabriel presented himself, with his joy not unmingled with anxiety. Full of happiness at meeting Diana again, and at the tender glances which she cast on him, he had at first forgotten the cardinal's letter, but it now returned to his memory, filling him with distracting doubts. Would Diana consent to this marriage? Could she love this François de Montmorency?

Martin Guerre, who accompanied him, informed him that general report said that she did not love him. This faithful squire to do honour to his master at court, had ordered for himself a complete suit of

brown cloth with yellow trimmings, which he paid for, and put on immediately. Therefore, the tailor was much astonished to see him return half an hour after in different clothes. This he explained by saying, that as the evening was cold, he had judged it expedient to put on something warmer, but that he was so much pleased with his new suit, that he wished for another precisely similar.

The tailor in vain represented to him that he would appear to be always wearing the same; he persisted in his idea, and compelled the tailor to promise that he would not make the slightest difference in the suits, only for the second order he asked for a little credit.

Gabriel perceived Diana the instant he entered the room; she was seated near the queen dauphin, as Marie Stuart was generally called. To accost her at once might have appeared presumptuous in a new comer, and would doubtless have been rather imprudent, so he resigned himself to wait for a favourable opportunity. Soon after, the king announced that as a surprise to the ladies, a stage had been prepared, and that the evening was to be finished by a five-act play. This news was received with acclamation, and the gentlemen led the ladies to their places. Gabriel was too late to take Diana, so he stood a little way behind her. The queen soon noticed, and sent for him.

"M. d'Exmès," said she, "why were you not at the tournay to-day?"

"Madame, the duties which his majesty has confided to me prevented my having the honour."

"So much the worse," replied Catherine, with a charming smile, "for you are certainly one of our best cavaliers. You made the king reel yesterday, which is what few can do, and I should like to see new proofs of your prowess." Gabriel bowed.

"Do you know the piece they are playing?" continued the queen.

"Only in the Latin, madam; for I hear that it is an adaptation of a piece of Terence."

"Oh, I see that you are as learned as you are valiant. Now go and seat yourself behind me, among my ladies."

Gabriel gladly obeyed, and as Diana was at the end of the line next to the passage, he seated himself beside her. The piece was a comedy, and was received with much laughter and noisy enthusiasm, so that the lovers found an opportunity to converse unheard.

'Gabriel' and 'Diana' were the first words that passed. "Are you then to marry François de Montmorency?" asked Gabriel.

"You seem high in the good graces of the queen," was Diana's reply.

"She called me."

"It is the king who desires this marriage."

"But you consent, Diana?"

"But you listen to the queen, Gabriel."

"Oh!" cried Gabriel, "do you really interest yourself in what another might make me feel? Diana, I am horribly jealous of you, for I love you madly."

"M. d'Exmès," cried the poor girl, trying to be severe, "I am called Madame de Castro."

"But you are a widow? You are free."

"Free! alas!"

"Oh, Diana, you sigh. Confess that the childish feeling which sweetened our first years has left some trace in your heart. Do not fear to be heard, they are all laughing around us. Diana, smile on me, and tell me that you love me, as I love you."

"But you must tell me how that is," said the little hypocrite.

"Listen to me, Diana; for the six years that I was away from you, I have thought of you constantly. On arriving at Paris, a month after you, I learned that you were the daughter of the king and of Madame de Valentinois; but it was not this that made me fear to approach you; it was your title of Madame de

Castro. Still I thought, 'acquire renown—approach yourself nearer to her station—some day she will hear you praised, and will admire you.' I went to the Duc de Guise, who seemed the most likely to lead me to the glory that I coveted. I was with him at Metz, and while there, I heard of the capture of Hesdin by the imperial troops, and the death of your husband, who had not even seen you again since your marriage.

"How I fought, you must ask M. de Guise. I was at Abbeville, at Dinant, at Cateau-Cambresis—I was everywhere where there was danger. I heard you had retired to a convent, and I accompanied the duke to Italy. At Civitella, by a letter from his eminence of Lorraine to his brother, I learned your intended marriage. Then I asked permission to return to France, to bring to the king the captured banners; but my motive was to see you, Diana—to ascertain if your heart was in this new marriage, and to ask you, as I have done—do you love me?"

"Gabriel," said Diana, softly, "I will reply to you. When I arrived a child of twelve years old, at this court, after a short period of astonishment and curiosity, I was nearly killed with ennui—the gilded chains of this existence weighed upon me, and I bitterly regretted the loss of the woods and fields of Vimoutiers and Montgomery. Each night I cried myself to sleep. Nevertheless the king, my father, was very kind to me, and I tried to reply to his affection by my love. But where was my liberty? Where was Aloyse? Where were you, Gabriel? I did not see the king every day, and Madame de Valentinois was cold and constrained with me, and seemed almost to avoid me, and I required love, Gabriel; therefore I suffered much that first year."

"Poor dear Diana," said Gabriel.

"Thus," continued Diana, "while you fought, I languished. It is the general fate; the man acts and the woman waits, and it is much harder to wait than to act. At the end of that time the death of the Duc

de Castro left me a widow, and the king sent me to pass my time of mourning in the Convent des Filles Dieu. The pious and calm existence of the cloister suited me much better than the perpetual intrigues and turmoil of the court, therefore I asked and obtained permission to remain there. In the convent, at all events, they loved me, and the good sister Monique reminded me of Aloyse. Then I was free to dream—of whom, and what—you guess, do you not?"

Gabriel replied with a passionate glance. Happily the play was an interesting one.

"Five years of peace and hope passed," continued Diana, "I had but one misfortune,—that of losing Enquerrand. At length, however, the king recalled me, and informed me that I was destined to become the wife of François de Montmorenc: I have resisted, Gabriel; I was no longer the child who knew not what she was doing. But then my father begged me, and showed me how much this marriage was for the good of the kingdom. You had forgotten me—it was the king that said so, Gabriel. And then, where were you? In short, he begged so much, that yesterday—only yesterday, I promised all he wished, only stipulating for three months' delay, and that I should find out what had become of you."

"You have promised?" cried Gabriel, turning pale.

"Yes, but then I had not seen you, and I did not know that on that very day you would unexpectedly appear to renew in me all my old feelings—you, handsome, prouder than ever, yet still the same. Ah! I felt at once that my promise to the king was worthless, and this marriage impossible — that my life belonged to you, and that if you loved me still I loved you for ever."

"Ah! you are an angel, Diana."

"But, Gabriel, since fate has brought us together again, let us consider the obstacles that we have to contend against. The king is ambitious for his

daughter, and the Castros and Montmorencies will make him difficult to satisfy, alas!"

"Be easy on that point, Diana. The house to which I belong is as noble as theirs, and it will not be the first time that it has been allied to the royal family of France."

"Oh, Gabriel, I am so glad to hear that; I am very ignorant and do not know the name of Exmès. So long as you are not a Montgomery——"

"And why not a Montgomery?" cried Gabriel.

"Oh, the Montgomeries have done some wrong to the king, it appears, for he hates them."

"Really," said Gabriel, with a sinking heart, "but is it the Montgomeries who have injured the king, or the king who has injured them?"

"My father is too good to have been unjust."

"Good to you, Diana, but to his enemies?"

"Terrible, perhaps. But never mind, what are the Montgomeries to us?"

"If I were one, Diana?"

"Oh! do not say so."

"But if I were?"

"If it were so—if I found myself thus placed between my father and you I would throw myself at the feet of the injured party, whoever he might be, and I would weep, and beg that my father should pardon you, or you my father, for my sake."

"And your voice is so powerful, Diana, that all would yield to it, unless, indeed, blood has been shed, for then only blood can wash away blood."

"Oh! you frighten me. But you are only trying me, are you not?"

"Yes, Diana, that is all."

"And there is no hatred between my father and you?"

"I trust not, Diana; I should suffer too much if I made you suffer."

"Then, Gabriel, I hope to obtain my father's promise that he will abandon this marriage, which would

kill me. A powerful king, as he is, must surely be able to satisfy these Montmorencies."

"No, Diana, all his treasures and all the honours he could bestow cannot compensate for you."

"So you think, Gabriel; but, happily, François de Montmorency does not think so, and he would prefer a marshal's baton to your poor Diana. But, mon Dieu! the piece seems to be finished."

"Impossible! already. But you are right, here comes the epilogue."

"Happily, we have said what we wished to say."

"I have not said the thousandth part!"

"Nor I either. But, Gabriel, do not go and talk again to the queen."

"No, not if you do not wish it. But, alas! here is an end to the epilogue. Adieu, for a time, Diana; give me a last word to cheer me."

"Au revoir, my little husband," replied she with a charming smile.

Gabriel disappeared quickly, so as to keep his promise of not speaking to the queen, and when he got home he wrote the following letter:—

"My good Aloyse,

"Diana loves me; but this is not what I ought to tell you first. Come to me, Aloyse: after six years of absence I desire to embrace you again. I am now captain of the King's Guards, one of the most coveted military appointments; and the name which I have made for myself will aid to re-establish the glory of the one which I received from my ancestors. I want you here to partake of my joy, for Diana loves me—my Diana—my old playmate, who has not forgotten her good Aloyse, although she calls the king, 'father.' Yes, the daughter of the king and Madame de Valentinois, the widow of the Duc de Castro, loves still with all her heart her old friends. She has just told me so, and her sweet voice still vibrates in my ear."

CHAPTER X.

PEACE OR WAR.

On the 7th of June the king held a council, and the Vicomte d'Exmès, as captain of the guard, stood near the door with a drawn sword in his hand. All the interest of the council consisted as usual in the working of the ambitions of the houses of Guise and Montmorency, which were represented, on this occasion, by the Cardinal de Lorraine and the constable himself.

"Sire," said the cardinal, "the danger is pressing, the enemy is at our doors; a formidable army is organizing in Flanders, and at any moment Philip the Second may invade our territory, and his wife, Mary of England, declare war against us. Sire, you want a young, active, and enterprising general, who shall act boldly, and whose name alone shall be a terror to the Spaniards."

"Like your brother, of course," sneered the constable.

"Yes, like my brother," replied the cardinal, boldly, "like the conqueror at Metz and at Valenza. Yes, sire, you must recall the Duc de Guise, who, from want of means in Italy, has been forced to raise the siege of Civitella, and who will be invaluable to you here."

"Sire," said the constable, "recall the army if you please, since this invasion of Italy has ended, as I predicted, in ridicule. But you do not want a general; all is still peaceful, and you can keep it so; it is not a general that you require, but a minister, who is not blinded by his passion for war, but who will consider the true interests of France."

"Like yourself, of course," cried the cardinal.

"Yes, like myself," replied Clune de Montmorency, proudly, "and I counsel the king not to think of a war which depends entirely on his own pleasure (for Philip the Second trembles before France, and his wife is silent), but to think of the peaceful interests of the kingdom, to which those who contribute are worth one hundred times more than any general."

"And deserve one hundred times more of the king, I suppose?"

"His eminence perfectly expresses my thoughts, and I am going even now to ask his majesty for a proof that my peaceful services have pleased him!"

"What is it?" asked the king, with a sigh.

"Sire, I beg your majesty to declare publicly the honour that you intend to do my house, in granting to my son the hand of Madame d'Angoulême."

Gabriel grew pale, and shuddered, but recovered himself a little on hearing the cardinal reply—"The bull of the pope, dissolving the marriage of François de Montmorency with Mademoiselle de Fiennes, has not yet arrived, and may not arrive at all."

"We will do without it, then," said the constable; "an edict can dissolve a clandestine marriage, and I beg his majesty to grant me one, to prove to myself, and to those who attack me, his approbation of my views."

"Doubtless I can make such an edict," said the king, whose weakness of character was not proof against such firm language.

The constable looked triumphant; but at this moment a trumpet was heard, playing a foreign air. All looked at each other with astonishment. Then an usher entered, and announced that Sir Edward Fleming, a herald from England, solicited the honour of being admitted into the presence of his majesty.

"Let him enter," said the king, surprised, but calm; while the dauphin and the princes drew nearer to the throne.

The herald entered, and bowing to the king, com-

menced, "Mary, Queen of England, France, and Ireland, to Henry, King of France. For having given encouragement to the English Protestants, enemies of our religion and of our State, and for having received them in France, and preserved them from the just pursuit instituted against them, We Mary of England, France, and Ireland, denounce war by land and by sea against Henry of France, in token of which, I, Edward Fleming, herald, throw down my glove."

At a gesture from the king, the Vicomte d'Exmès picked up the glove; then Henry said, simply and coldly, to the herald, "I thank you, you may retire."

The herald bowed, and obeyed. The sound of the English trumpets was heard once more, then all was quiet.

At last the king broke the silence, by saying, "My cousin of Montmorency, it seems to me that you were rather hasty in promising us peace, and the good intentions of Queen Mary. This protection of the Protestants is a mere pretext; however, a King of France does not fear war, and if Flanders lets us alone for a little time—— Well! what is it now, Florimel?"

"Sire," said the usher, "a courier from the Governor of Picardy has arrived with special despatches."

"Go and see what they are, M. le Cardinal, I beg of you," said Henry.

The cardinal soon returned with the despatches, which he laid before the king. "Ah, gentlemen!" cried he, after glancing over them; "here is more news. The armies of Philip the Second are uniting at Givet, and M. Gaspard de Coligny sends us word that the Duke of Savoy is at their head—a worthy enemy. Your nephew, M. de Montmorency, thinks that the Spanish troops are about to attack Mézières and Rocroy; he demands instant reinforcements to enable him to garrison these places, and make head against our enemies. You were not happy in

your predictions to-day. Mary of England was quiet, you said, Philip afraid of us, and the frontiers quiet. M. de Lorraine, write to your brother to return at once; as to family affairs, we must adjourn them, and we can well wait for the dispensation from the pope, to celebrate the marriage of Madame d'Angoulême. The sitting is over for the present, gentlemen, but we will meet again to-night. Adieu! until then, and may God protect France."

CHAPTER XI.

A DOUBLE ROGUE.

THE constable returned home in a very bad humour: he was met there by his squire, Arnold du Thill, who had come to speak to him.

"I am not in the humour to speak to you just now, Arnold," said the constable.

"Oh! I know, monsieur, you are annoyed at the turn that matters have taken about the marriage, but you know that the king's humour may change to-morrow. There is, however, a far more formidable obstacle in Madame d'Angoulême herself."

"Ah! what do you know about her?"

"How does monseigneur think that I have spent my time this last fortnight?"

"Well, it is true that I have heard nothing of you lately; you of whom there was some complaint every evening."

"Yes, but it is now Martin Guerre to whom this is transferred. It is he who was picked up drunk by the watch; and it is he who was accused of attempting to carry off the wife of M. Gorju, the tailor."

"Yes," said the constable, laughing; "and his master defends him, and says that he has been always the quietest and best-behaved of squires."

"He believes himself possessed of the devil."

"But what of Madame d'Angoulême?"

"Why, monseigneur, I have but to put on a certain brown and yellow suit, and the Vicomte d'Exmès speaks to me in the most confidential manner; and who do you think the vicomte is?"

"Parbleu! a frantic partisan of the Guises?"

"More than that; the favoured lover of Madame d'Angoulême."

"What the devil do you mean? What do you know about it?"

"I am the confidant, I tell you. It is I, who half the times carry the letters to the lady. I am on the best terms with her maid, who is, however, much astonished at finding her lover so uncertain—one day bold, and the next quiet and reserved. The Vicomte and Madame d'Angoulême see each other three times a week in the queen's circle, and write to each other every day. Really, if I did not interest myself too much for myself, I should be quite interested for them, their loves are so pure and romantic; but your grace supplies me so well with pistoles that my services are all for you."

"Well, leave me now. You shall be well paid for all you do."

CHAPTER XII.

THE HEIGHT OF HAPPINESS.

"Martin," said Gabriel, the same day to his squire, "take this letter, and bring back an answer as soon as possible."

"Yes, monsieur, but I have a favour to beg; pray send some one to take care of me."

"Why, what new folly is this? Of what are you afraid?"

"Of myself, monsieur," cried Martin, piteously. "It seems that I have all at once become a drunkard and a gambler, and now, monsieur, they declare that last night I attempted to carry off the wife of M. Gorju, the tailor."

"Come, Martin, you are dreaming—but, stay, did you do this?"

"Dreaming, monsieur! here is the report, and, in reading it, I am overwhelmed with shame. I used to think that the devil amused himself by taking my form in which to play these nocturnal pranks, but you say that that is impossible; so I begin to think that I am sometimes possessed of an evil spirit."

"No, my poor Martin," said Gabriel, laughing; "only you give way to drinking sometimes, and then it seems you see double."

"But, monsieur, I only drink water."

"And yet, Martin, you were found drunk."

"Monsieur, that night I went to bed early, after saying my prayers, and I awoke in it the next morning, and it was only later that I learned what I had been doing all night."

"Well, Martin, I cannot give you any companion, for you alone know our secret."

"Then, monsieur, I will do my best, but I cannot answer for myself."

"Oh! nonsense; go, and remember that on this note depends my happiness or despair."

Martin replied with a sigh, and went out. Two hours after, he returned with the answer. Gabriel took it, and read. "Let us thank God, Gabriel, the king has yielded, and we shall be happy. You already know of the arrival of the herald from England, who came to declare war in the name of Queen Mary, and the news of the great movement which is preparing in Flanders. These events, menacing perhaps for France, are favourable for our love, since they augment the power of the Duc de Guise, and diminish that of Montmorency. Still, however, the

king hesitated; but I prayed, Gabriel—I said that I had found you again — that you were noble and valiant, and I named you. The king, without promising anything, said he would reflect, and that after all, the interests of the State becoming less pressing, it would be cruel for him to sacrifice my happiness; that he could give to François de Montmorency a compensation with which he ought to be satisfied. He has promised nothing, but he will do all. Oh! you will love him, Gabriel, as I do; this good father will realise all our dreams. I have so much to say to you, and written words are so cold! come to me this evening at six o'clock; during the council, Jacinthe will bring you to me, and we shall have a whole hour to talk over our happy future. However, I foresee that this campaign will call you away, and, alas! you must go to serve my father and deserve me, Gabriel—I who love you so much—for I do love you. Why should I try to hide it? Come, then, and let me see if you are as happy as your Diana."

"Oh, yes, very happy," cried Gabriel; "what can now be wanting to my happiness?"

"Doubtless, not the presence of your old nurse," said Aloyse, who had entered while he was reading.

"Aloyse!" cried Gabriel, running towards her, and embracing her—"oh, yes, good nurse, I wanted you. How are you? You are not changed; neither am I—in heart at least—but why have you been so long in coming?"

"The late rains, monsieur, have flooded the roads, but your letters made me brave all obstacles——"

"Oh, you are right, Aloyse, because I want some one to rejoice with me. Do you see this letter? it is from Diana—from your other child—and she announces to me that all the obstacles to our marriage are removed, and that she loves me. Am I not at the summit of happiness?"

"And yet, monsieur, if it were necessary to renounce Diana?" said Aloyse, in a grave, sad tone.

"Impossible, Aloyse! besides, I tell you that all difficulties have been overcome."

"One may conquer the difficulties which proceed from man, but not those from God," replied the nurse. "You know that I love you, and would give my life to spare you pain. Well, if I said to you, without asking the reason, Monsieur, renounce Diana—cease to see her—stifle your love by every means in your power—a terrible secret, into which I implore you not to inquire, lies between you; if I said this to you, supplicating you on my knees, what would you say?"

"Aloyse, if it were my life you asked for you should have it, but my love is beyond my power; but you terrify me, nurse. Do not keep me in this horrible suspense, but whatever you have, and ought to say to me, say at once, I entreat."

"You wish it, monsieur? Must I reveal to you the secret which I had sworn to keep from you? Yet God, himself, seems now to order me to disclose it. But, monsieur, are you not deceived in the nature of your affection for Diana?"

"No, Aloyse, certainly not; and her beauty——"

"Oh, it must be so; for, according to all probability, Diana is your sister."

"Diana, my sister!" cried Gabriel, springing up. "How can the daughter of the king and of Madame de Valentinois be my sister?"

"Monsieur, Diana was born in May, 1539. Your father disappeared in the January of the same year; and do you know of what he was suspected, and of what they accused him? Of being the favoured lover of Diana of Poitiers, and the rival of the Dauphin, now King of France. Now compare the dates, monsieur."

"Heavens and earth!" cried Gabriel. "But let me see," said he, trying to collect his thoughts. "My father was accused—who knows that it was true? Diana was born five months after the death of my father, but what proves that she is not the daughter of the king? He loves her as his child."

"The king may he deceived, or I may be wrong. I do not say that Diana is your sister; I only say that it is probable. My terrible duty was to tell you this, Gabriel. Say, was it not? You would not have renounced her unless I had done so; but now your conscience must judge your love."

"Oh, but this doubt is a thousand times worse than misfortune itself. Mon Dieu! who will teach me the truth?"

"The secret was only known to two people in the world—your father, and Madame de Valentinois, and she will never confess that she has deceived the king, and that Diana is not his child."

"And at least, then, if I do not love my sister, I love the daughter of my father's murderer; for it was the dauphin, was it not, Aloyse?"

"No one knows that but God!"

"Everywhere confusion, doubt, and terror," cried Gabriel. "Oh, I shall go mad!—but stay, I will go to Madame de Valentinois. I will swear to her that her secret shall be safe. I will go to Diana, and interrogate the feelings of my heart."

"Poor child!" said Aloyse.

"And I will not lose a minute," continued he, rising. "Perhaps, before I return, I may have lifted the veil."

"Can I do nothing for you?"

"Pray for me, Aloyse."

CHAPTER XIII.

DIANA OF POITIERS.

The constable was still with Diana of Poitiers, and was speaking to her in a tone as rude and imperious, as hers to him was gentle and mild.

"Eh, mordieu! she is your daughter," cried he,

"and you have the same right over her as the king. Exact this marriage."

"But, my friend, you know that we have always been cold to each other, and see each other but seldom. She has gained, besides, so strong an influence over the king, that I scarcely know now whether she or I be the most powerful. Leave alone this marriage, which presents so many difficulties, and replace it by one still more brilliant. We will obtain from the king the hand of the little Princess Marguerite for your son."

"My son sleeps in a bed, and not in a cradle," replied he; "and a little girl, who can hardly speak, cannot aid the fortunes of my house. It is just because your daughter has so much influence with the king, that I desire the match, and I will have it in spite of every one."

"Well, I will do my best for you, if you will but be more gentle with me."

At that moment some one knocked at the door, and announced that the Vicomte d'Exmès begged for an audience of the duchess.

"The lover!" cried the constable. "Does he come to ask for the hand of your daughter, I wonder?"

"Shall I admit him?" asked the duchess, docilely

"Certainly, in a few minutes; but first listen to me. If he comes to you, it is probably because he is in some difficulty, therefore refuse him everything he asks. If he wishes you to say yes, say no. Be disdainful and implacable. Do you understand, and will you do it?" Then the constable went out, and Gabriel entered.

"Madam," said he, "in seeking this interview, I may have taken a liberty; but there are circumstances so grave and serious, as to place one above all ordinary rules of etiquette, and I am, madame, in one of those grave situations. The man who comes to you, places his life in your hands, and implores your pity."

Madame de Valentinois gave no sign of encou-

ragement. She sat leaning her head on her hand, and looking at Gabriel with a sort of ennuyéd astonishment.

"Madam," continued he, trying to shake off the influence of this affected silence, "you know, or do not know, perhaps, that I love Madame de Castro. I love her, madam, with a profound, ardent, and irresistible love."

Diana gave a nonchalant smile.

"I speak of this love which fills my soul," continued Gabriel, "to show that I understand every effect of love and passion. Love to me is sacred, as it is all powerful. Were the husband of Madame de Castro still alive, I should love her equally; I should not even try to overcome it—it is only a fictitious love that can be conquered. Thus, madam, you yourself, chosen and loved by the greatest king in the world, may not on that account have been sheltered from the influence of sincere passion, and may not have been able to resist it. A king is enamoured, and no wonder, of your admirable beauty; you are touched by this love, but your heart cannot always respond to it. A gentleman, handsome, brave, and devoted, sees you, loves you, and this more obscure, but not less real passion, enters your heart, when the king's fails to do so. It is not a title that gains a heart. What could prevent you from having one day in your generous good faith, preferred the subject to the monarch? It is not I, at least, who could make it a crime in Diana of Poitiers, that being loved by Henry the Second, she loved the Comte de Montgomery,"

Diana started up, and looked surprised; so few people knew that secret. "Have you proofs of that love?" asked she, uneasily.

"Only a moral certainty, madam."

"Ah!" said she, recovering her insolent assurance, "well, I do not mind confessing that I did love the Comte de Montgomery. What then?"

"And I doubt not that you still love his memory;

for, if he has disappeared from this world, it was for you. It is then in his name I come to you, and ask you a question, which will appear very bold, no doubt; but your answer, if you will be good enough to give it, will fill me with gratitude, for on this answer depends my life. If you do not refuse me, I shall be devoted to you, body and soul; and a devoted heart and arm are useful, even to the highest, madam."

"Finish, monsieur, and let us come to this terrible question."

Gabriel knelt before her, and went on, "Madam, it was in the year 1538, that you loved Jacques de Montgomery, was it not?"

"It is possible."

"It was in January, 1539, that he disappeared, and in May, 1539, that Madame de Castro was born."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, madam, this is the secret, which I come to implore of you on my knees—the secret on which my fate depends, and which I swear shall die in my bosom if you confide it to me. Madam, was the Comte de Montgomery the father of Madame de Castro?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Diana, disdainfully, "the question is bold, indeed, and you were right to preface it with so many preambles; however, you interest me, as an enigma, for what can it matter to you, whether she be the daughter of the king, or of the count? The king passes for her father, that should content you if you are ambitious."

"I have a very strong reason, madam, but I beg you not to ask for it."

"Oh, you want my secrets, and you keep your own. A good bargain, truly."

Gabriel took the ivory crucifix that hung over the prie Dieu behind him: "On your eternal salvation, madam, swear not to reveal the secret which I am about to confide to you, and not to use it against me."

"Such an oath!" cried Diana.

"Yes, madam, for if you swear that, I know you will keep it."

"And if I refuse to swear?"

"I must be silent, madam, and you will have refused me my life."

"Do you know, monsieur, that you pique my woman's curiosity strongly. If I swear, it is from pure curiosity, I warn you."

"I also, madam, wish to know; only I wait for my answer as a man waits for his sentence of death. Will you swear, madam?"

"Say the words, and I will repeat them;" and after him she repeated, "On my eternal salvation I swear never to reveal to any one the secret you are about to confide to me, and to act as though I were ignorant of it."

"Madam," said Gabriel, "I thank you for this first condescension. You will understand all when I tell you that I am the son of Jacques de Montgomery."

"His son?"

"Yes, so that if she be his daughter, she whom I love with a mad passion is my sister."

"Ah," thought Diana, "this saves the constable."

"Now, madam, will you do me the favour of swearing on this crucifix, that Madame de Castro is the daughter of the king? You do not reply, madam."

"Because I cannot pronounce this oath, monsieur."

"Ah, mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Gabriel, "then she is my sister."

"No, monsieur, I will never confess that she is the daughter of any one but the king."

"Oh, truly, madam, how good you are. But pardon me, your interest in me may induce you to speak thus. Swear, madam, and your child will bless you."

"I will not swear, monsieur; why should I?"

"But, madam, you swore just now to satisfy

simple curiosity; and when it concerns a man's whole destiny—indeed two destinies—you hesitate."

"Well, monsieur, I will not swear," said Diana, coldly and resolutely.

"And if, nevertheless, I marry Madame de Castro, and she be my sister, will not the crime be upon your head?"

"No, as I have not sworn."

"Horrible!" cried Gabriel; "but think, then, madam, that I can proclaim everywhere that you loved the Comte de Montgomery, and that you had deceived the king."

"You have no proofs," replied she, with her cruel smile. "I should deny it, monsieur, and who would believe you? But, pardon me," continued she, rising, "I am obliged to leave you, monsieur; you have really interested me much, and your history is a singular one." So saying she rang the bell.

"It is infamous!" cried Gabriel. "Oh! why are you a woman? But take care, nevertheless, madam, you will not play with my heart and life with impunity: God will punish you and avenge me."

"You think so," replied she, with her mocking laugh. At this moment the page whom she had summoned lifted the tapestry. She bowed ironically to Gabriel and left the room.

Gabriel retired, mad with rage and grief

CHAPTER XIV.

LOVER OR BROTHER.

When Jacinthe introduced Gabriel into the room which Madame de Castro occupied at the Louvre she ran joyfully to meet him. "Here you are at last," she cried; "I have waited for you so impa-

tiently, for I want you to share my happiness. I have been talking and laughing all alone, but now we can be happy together—but what is the matter, Gabriel? You look cold and grave, and almost sad; is it thus—that you show your love to me, and your gratitude to my father?"

"To your father—yes; let us speak of your father, Diana. As to this gravity that so astonishes you, it is my habit so to receive the good gifts of fortune, for I always fear them. I have been so little accustomed to them, and they often precede misfortune."

"I did not know that you were either so unlucky or so philosophical, Gabriel," replied the young girl, half amused and half piqued. "But as you say, let us speak of the king; has he not been good and kind?"

"Yes, Diana; he loves you well—does he not?'

"With an infinite goodness and tenderness."

"Doubtless," murmured Gabriel to himself, "he believes her to be his daughter." Then aloud he said, "There is one thing that astonishes me, and that is, why he left you for twelve years without knowing or seeing you. Have you ever spoken to him of it, Diana?"

"Oh, yes; but it was not his doing."

"Whose then?"

"Why, Madame de Valentinois, my mother."

"And why did she do that, Diana? Did not your birth give her a greater right to the love of the king; What had she to fear? Her husband was dead, and her father also."

"Indeed, Gabriel, I cannot explain the pride which keeps her from recognising me as her child. She did her best to keep the king from acknowledging me, and refused to the last to be named in the act of legitimation. She seems to have a kind of aversion to me."

"An aversion which may be remorse," thought Gabriel, "if she knows that she has betrayed the king."

"But what are you thinking of, Gabriel, and why do you ask me these questions?"

"For no reason—a doubt of my unquiet spirit. But you love the king—you find in him a real father?"

"Oh! certainly. I felt drawn towards him at once. I love him—not as the king—not as my benefactor, but as my father."

"These instincts cannot deceive," thought Gabriel, joyfully, and he said, "It makes me very happy, Diana, to see you love your father so much."

"But now, Gabriel, let us speak of ourselves if you please."

"Yes, yes," cried Gabriel, "let us think of this attachment, which binds us for life to each other—let us look into each other's hearts. Tell me, Diana, what do you feel for me? Do you not love me less than your father?"

"Jealous!" cried she. "You know that I love you differently, and it is easy to explain it. When the king is here I am happy but calm, and my heart beats no quicker than usual; but when I see you a singular agitation seizes me. I say to my father, before every one, all the caressing things I can think of; but to you, Gabriel, I feel as though I should not have the courage to do so even when I am your wife. In a word, when my father is near all my pleasure is peaceful, and while you are present it is troubled—almost painful."

"Oh! hush!" cried Gabriel, "you love me, and that frightens me, and at the same time reassures me. God would not have permitted this love if it were not right."

"What do you mean, Gabriel? Why does the avowal, which I have now the right to make, trouble you? What danger can there be?"

"None, dear Diana, none. Do not mind what I say, it is joy that makes me act thus strangely. Too much happiness bewilders me. But you did not always love me as you do now: when we used to

walk together in the woods at Vimoutiers, you only felt the affection of a sister for me."

"I was a child then, Gabriel. I had not then dreamed of you during six years of solitude, and I had not lived for two months in the shadow of a court, where the corruption of language and manners has made me cherish still more our holy and pure passion."

"Is it true, Diana?"

"But you, Gabriel, in your turn open your heart, as I have mine. If my words have pleased you, let me also hear how you love me."

"I cannot tell you that," cried Gabriel. "Do not ask me to interrogate myself, it is too frightful!"

"Oh, Gabriel," cried Diana in terror, "it is your words that are frightful. What! can you not even tell me that you love me?"

"If I love you, Diana! You ask me if I love you? Yes; I love you like a madman—like a criminal, perhaps."

"Like a criminal! What crime can there be in our love? Are we not both free? Does not my father consent? What can be the matter with you, Gabriel; are you ill? Whence come these fears to you, who are generally so firm and strong? I am never afraid when near you. I trust you as I would my father. See, I do not fear you," and she approached nearer to him and laid her hand on his shoulder.

Gabriel repulsed her with terror. "No, no! go;" he cried, "leave me."

"Oh, mon Dieu!" cried she, drawing back," "he repulses me—he does not love me."

"I love you too much."

"If you loved me, would my caresses horrify you?"

"Do they horrify me? Is it indeed my instinct that makes me repulse you?" cried he. "Oh, come here, Diana, that I may learn what I really feel. Come, and let me embrace you once again." He

drew her towards him, and pressed a long kiss on her forehead. "Oh," he cried, "it is not the voice of blood which speaks in me—but that of love alone—I feel it. What happiness!"

"What do you mean, Gabriel? But you say that you love me, and that is all I care to know."

"Oh! yes, I love you. I adore you, passionately, madly, and to feel your heart beat thus against mine, is heaven—or hell," he cried, suddenly disengaging himself. "Oh! leave me, for I am cursed!"

Then he rushed from the room, leaving Diana mute with terror and despair. He descended the stairs mechanically, but all he had gone through had been too much for him, and in the gallery of the Louvre he lost consciousness, and sank fainting on the floor. When he returned to life, he felt a hand on his forehead, and, opening his eyes, he saw the dauphiness—Marie Stuart—bending over him.

"It is you, M. d'Exmès," said she; "how you frightened me—I thought you were dead. How pale you are—what is the matter? Shall I call for assistance."

"No, madam," replied he, trying to rise, "your voice has recalled me to life."

"Let me assist you," she said, "you had fainted. Are you really better?"

"Yes, madam, and I owe you a thousand thanks for your kindness. Oh, I remember, now—I remember all. Oh, mon Dieu!"

"Is it some great grief which has overwhelmed you?" said Marie Stuart. "Oh, yes! it must be so, for you grow paler than ever. I will call some one to take you home."

"I thank you, madam," said Gabriel, trying to rally himself, "but I feel strong enough now. While I live, I will remember your kindness; you seem like a consoling angel to me."

"Oh! what I did was very natural. I would have done as much for every one whom I saw suffering, and surely I should do it for you, whom I know to be

a devoted friend of my uncle Guise. I deserve no thanks."

"That little was much to me in my state. Adieu, madam."

"Adieu, then M. d'Exmès, and take care of yourself." Then she held out her hand to Gabriel, which he kissed respectfully.

When he arrived at his rooms, he found Aloyse waiting anxiously for him.

"Well?" said she.

Gabriel tried to overcome a second feeling of faintness, which came over him, and replied in a hollow voice, "I know nothing. Both that woman and my own heart were silent. I know nothing, but that I burn and yet shiver."

"Courage, monsieur."

"Courage? Thank God, I think I am dying," and he again fell into a state of unconsciousness from which he did not so soon recover.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ILLNESS.

"THE patient will live, Dame Aloyse, but the illness has been serious, and his recovery will be slow. So much bleeding has weakened him greatly, but he will live, you may be assured. I thank God that the weakness of the body has diminished the strength of the shock that his heart has received. That is a wound that we cannot cure, and his might have been mortal."

The person who spoke these words was a tall man with piercing eyes, who appeared about fifty years of age. He was called Nostradamus.

"But, mon Dieu!" said Aloyse, "it is now the 2nd of July, and he has lain here since the 7th of June, and during all this time he has never said a word,

and never once recognised me. He seems like one already dead; if you touch him, he does not seem to know it."

"So much the better, I repeat. I do not wish him to return till the latest possible moment to the remembrance of his troubles. If he remains in this state for another month, as I hope he will, he is quite cured. Indeed he is so now, if there be no relapse, and so you may tell that pretty waiting-maid, who comes here twice a-day to ask after him. For in all this, there is a passion for some great lady, is there not? It is to be hoped that he will recover the health of both body and mind at once. I can answer for the one, but not for the other. Still the constant visits of the servant would seem to pronounce it not a desperate case."

"Oh! yes it is," cried Aloyse.

"Come, come, Dame Aloyse! those who are rich, brave, young, and handsome like the Vicomte d'Exmès, are not long repulsed by the ladies of a court like ours."

"But suppose that it is not so, and that when my master recovers his reason, the first thought that occurred to him was that the lady whom he loves is irrevocably lost to him; what will happen?"

"It would indeed be very serious—so powerful a grief in so weak a brain."

"Ah! mon Dieu! my child will die!"

"There would be a great chance of a return of the inflammation of the brain. But surely you can hold out some hope? The most distant chance might save him."

"Then he shall be saved!" cried Aloyse, "I would perjure myself to save him."

A week passed and Gabriel seemed to notice the people around him, and then to aid them in what they did for him. At the end of another week he could speak, although incoherently, yet his words often seemed to refer to his past life. Then he recognised Aloyse and Martin Guerre; he asked for what he wanted, and spoke gently and reasonably.

One morning he said suddenly, "Aloyse, what of the war?"

"What war, monsieur?"

"The war with England and Spain."

"Monsieur, the accounts are bad. They say that the Spaniards, with 12,000 English, have entered Picardy."

"So much the better," said Gabriel.

Aloyse attributed this answer to the remains of delirium. But the next day he said, "I did not ask you yesterday whether the Duc de Guise had returned."

"He is en route, monsieur."

"What day of the month is it?"

"The 4th of August."

"Then on the 7th I shall have been confined to this room for two months."

"Oh!" cried Aloyse trembling, "then monsieur remembers."

"Everything, Aloyse; but it appears that I am forgotten, since no one comes to ask after me."

"Monsieur is mistaken," said Aloyse, watching anxiously the effect of her words; "a servant called Jacinthe, came twice a-day to ask after you; but for the last fortnight, since you have been better, she has not come."

"She comes no more. Do you know why?"

"Yes, monsieur. Her mistress has obtained permission from the king to retire into a convent until the end of the war."

"Really," said Gabriel, with a sweet and melancholy smile, while a tear, the first he had shed, rolled over his cheek,—"dear Diana."

"Oh!" cried Aloyse, "monsieur has pronounced her name calmly and without injuring himself. He is saved—he will live."

"I am saved, Aloyse, but I shall not live."

"How so, monsieur?" said Aloyse, trembling.

"The body has bravely resisted, Aloyse, but the soul is mortally wounded, and cannot recover. Hap-

pily France is at war—my place is there—I shall go, as soon as I am able, and will take care never to return."

"You will get yourself killed, monsieur! and why?"

"Why? because Madame de Valentinois will not speak—because Diana is perhaps my sister, and I love her—because the king has perhaps murdered my father, although I do not know that for certain, and therefore as I can neither marry her whom I love, or avenge my father, there is nothing left here for me to do."

"No, monsieur, you are wrong. You have a terrible duty still to perform; but I will only speak to you of this on the day when M. Nostradamus shall assure me that you are strong enough to bear it."

This day arrived on the following week. Gabriel was well enough to go about as usual. "Do you persist in your determination, monsieur?" said Aloyse.

"Certainly."

"But if I give you a hope of discovering this secret?"

"You told me it was known but to two people, Madame de Valentinois, and my father, who is dead."

"But if he were not dead?"

"My father lives! Do you know it, Aloyse?"

"No, but I suppose it."

"But how to find him? Speak, what clue is there, Aloyse?"

"It is a frightful history, monsieur. I had sworn to my husband never to reveal it, for it will throw you into the same dangers, and draw upon you the same powerful enemies. But any danger is better than certain death, and I know the strength of your resolutions, so I will tell you all."

"Yes, Aloyse, speak quickly!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COQUETTE.

We will complete from the chronicles of the time the mournful history of the Comte de Montgomery, which Aloyse was only able to give in part to his son.

Jacques de Montgomery was, like all his race, brave and hardy, and fought valiantly under Francis the First, who raised him to the highest rank in the army, and the first place at court. In 1530 he married Claudine de la Boissière, a simple marriage of convenience, but she died three years afterwards, leaving Gabriel an infant. Soon after Jacques fell deeply in love with Diana de Poitiers. For three months he hovered near her, without daring to address her; but his looks were more than sufficient for her to understand his feelings, and she determined to make use of this passion when the occasion should arise. This was not long. Francis the First began to neglect the beautiful Diana, and to turn to Madame d'Étampes.

When the neglect became flagrant, Diana spoke for the first time in her life to the Comte de Montgomery—it was at a fête given by the king to his new favourite.

"M. de Montgomery," said Diana, calling him.

He approached with some confusion.

"How sad you are," continued she.

"Miserably so, madam."

"And why?"

"I wish to die, madam."

"Whence comes this terrible melancholy, monsieur?"

"I do not know."

"I know, M. de Montgomery—you love me."

Jacques turned pale, and trembled; then arming himself with resolution, said almost rudely, "Yes, madam, I love you; so much the worse for me."

"So much the better," returned she, laughing.

"What do you say, madam! Take care, my passion is no child's play, but is sincere, and deep, although hopeless."

"And why hopeless?"

"Because, madam—pardon my frankness—the king loves you."

"It is true," replied she, with a sigh.

"You see, then, madam, that I must conquer my unworthy passion."

"Unworthy of you?"

"Oh, no, madam, and if one day——"

"Enough, monsieur," said she, with a well-acted dignity, "let us change the conversation." And she went away, leaving the poor count oppressed with contending emotions—joy and grief—hate and love.

The next day Diana said to the king, laughing, "Do you know, sire, that M. de Montgomery is in love with me?"

"Oh," replied he, "the Montgomeries are of old family, and nearly as noble as myself—as brave, and doubtless as gallant."

"Is that all that you have to reply, sire?"

"What am I to say, ma mie? must I absolutely hate Montgomery for having, like myself, good taste and good eyes?"

Diana, wounded, said no more, but she determined to make another effort; so when she again saw the count, she said, "What, M. de Montgomery! sadder than ever."

"Yes, madam, for I fear that I offended you."

"Not offended, monsieur, only afflicted."

"Oh, madam—I who would give my life to spare you a tear——"

"Did you not hint that I was not worthy of the love of a gentleman?"

"Oh, madam, that could not be my meaning, for I love you deeply. I only intended to say that you could not love me since you loved the king, and he you."

"The king does not love me—nor I the king."

"Heavens! then you may love me."

"I might, but I could never tell you so."

"And why, madam?"

"To save my father's life, I consented to accept the protection of the king, but I could never do so for the Comte de Montgomery." She accompanied this speech with a look so loving that the count cried,

"Oh, madam, if you love me as I love you."

"Well?"

"My world is you,—for three months I have lived but in your sight—I love you with all the ardour of a first passion—your wonderful beauty intoxicates me; if you love me, be the Comtesse de Montgomerv—be my wife."

"Thanks! count," cried Diana, triumphantly, "I will remember your noble and generous words; meanwhile, remember that my colours are green and white."

The following day Francis the First remarked to Diana that her new adorer began to wear her colours publicly.

"Is it not his right, sire? can I do less for the man who offers me his name?"

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, indeed, sire," said Diana, who thought to re-awaken love, through jealousy.

But after a moment the king said, "If that be so as the place of grand marshal has remained vacant since the death of your first husband, I will bestow it on M. de Montgomery as a wedding present."

The ambitious Diana, with rage in her heart, said the same day to the count, "My valiant count, my noble Montgomery, I love you."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DAUPHIN.

THE marriage of Diana was arranged to take place at the end of three months from that time. The three months passed, and the count was as much in love as ever, although rumour said that Diana had been liberal in her favours to him. Still, on one pretext or another she postponed the marriage.

The reason of this was that not long after her engagement she had remarked that the young dauphin had began to notice her. Thereupon a new ambition awoke in her heart. The title of Comtesse de Montgomery might cover a defeat, but to be loved by the dauphin would be a triumph. Madame d'Étampes, who sneered at her age, was only loved by the father, but if she were loved by the son, to her would belong the bright future. Henri would be king—and she, always beautiful, almost a queen.

Although only nineteen he had been married for four years to Catherine de Medicis; but until moved by the beauty of Diana, he had never loved. Diana trembled however, fearing the king on the one hand, and the Comte de Montgomery on the other. But finding that the king seemed rather to encourage it, she grew bolder, and soon drew an avowal from the young prince. As for Montgomery, he loved her too blindly not to be easily deceived; and when all the court were talking of the amours of Diana and the dauphin, he alone saw nothing.

We will now let Aloyse finish the story in her own words.

"My husband," she said, "had not been deaf to all these reports, but he had not yet made up his mind to speak to his master about them. But one evening—it was the 7th of January, 1539,—we were

in the room with the count. He usually went every evening to see Madame de Poitiers, but this evening she had sent him word that she was indisposed. Suddenly M. de Langeais, M. de Boutières and the Comte de Sancerre—three gentlemen of the court—were announced. Each was wrapped in a cloak, and they all entered, laughing.

"'You are welcome, gentlemen,' said the count, 'but what good chance brings you here?'

"'A triple bet,' replied de Boutières, 'and your presence here makes me gain mine.'

"'Mine,' said De Langeais, 'was already gained.'

"'What was your bet, gentlemen?'

"'Why,' answered M. de Boutières, 'Langeais has made a bet that the dauphin would not be at the Louvre to-night. We have just come from the Louvre, and he was not there. I bet that you would be at home to-night, and you see that I have won.'

"'And you have won also, Sancerre, for in fact all three bets are won, and we should have won or lost together. Sancerre, M. de Montgomery, bet 100 pistoles that Madame de Poitiers would be ill to-night.'

"Your father, Gabriel, turned frightfully pale. 'You have gained, M. de Sancerre,' said he, 'for Madame de Poitiers has just let me know that she cannot receive me this evening, being indisposed.' Then they all three laughed again, but your father said, gravely, 'Now, gentlemen, will you be pleased to explain this enigma?'

"'With great pleasure, but it is no great secret, only you, whom it concerns, are as usual the last to know of it.'

"'Speak then.'

"'My dear count, we are about to speak, for it gives us pain to see a brave gentleman so deceived, but it is on condition that you will take it philosophically—for it is not worth your anger.'

"'I wait,' said the count, coldly.

"'My dear count, you doubtless know the mythology—you know the history of Endymion. When he

loved Diana Phœbe, he was about twenty, and his beard was not grown, and Endymion is not at the Louvre this evening, because the lady Luna is at home.'

"'Your proofs?' said the count.

"'You do not live very far from the lady Luna, go, and seek them yourself.'

"'You are right,' said the count, rising.

"'Ah! count,' said M. de Sancerre, 'do not be imprudent—it is not good to beard the young lion.'

"'Be easy,' said the count, as he opened the door for them to go out. Then turning to Pierrot, he said, 'My cloak and sword.'

"Pierrot brought them. 'Did you know this?' asked the count.

"'Yes, monsieur.'

"'And why did you not tell me?'

"'Monsieur,' stammered my husband.

"'I understand—you did not call yourselves my friends.' He was very pale, but he spoke quietly. 'How long have these reports been current?'

"'I believe for several weeks.'

"'Aloyse,' said the count, 'bring Gabriel to me, I want to kiss him.'

"You were asleep M. Gabriel, but I wrapped you up, and brought you to your father. He kissed you, and a tear fell on your cheek; then he said, 'Take care of my boy, Aloyse.' These were the last words I ever heard him speak. 'I will go with you, monsieur,' said my husband. 'No, Pierrot, I wish to be alone.'

"'But, monsieur ——'

"'I wish it.'

"Pierrot said nothing, but when the count was gone, he also took his cloak and sword. I did not try to stop him, for it was his duty to follow his master—even to death. He embraced me, and I wept bitterly as he left me. You, meanwhile, slept peacefully, that sleep, from which you woke an orphan."

CHAPTER XVIII.

JEALOUSY.

"THE hotel in which Madame de Poitiers lived was close to ours. Pierrot followed his master at a little distance, and saw him stop at the door, and knock. The servants tried to prevent his entrance, saying that their mistress was ill in her room, but the count persisted, and Pierrot glided in also, unperceived by him. At the top of the staircase, two of Madame de Poitiers' women met the count, and asked him what he wanted at such an hour. Ten o'clock had just struck. The count replied firmly, that he wished to see Madame de Poitiers—he spoke very loud—so that she could hear him, for her room was near. One of her women went into her, and returned, saying that Madame de Poitiers was in bed, but that she would come and speak to M. de Montgomery, and begged him to wait for her in the oratory. In a few minutes Madame de Poitiers entered hastily, 'What means this nocturnal invasion, monsieur,' said she, 'after the request which I made to you, not to come to me this evening?'

"'I will reply truly to you, madam. They tell me that I have a rival, and that this rival is the dauphin, and that he is with you this evening.'

"'And you believed it, since you came to see?' said Diana, haughtily.

"'I suffered, Diana, and I come to you to cure me.'

"'Well, now that you have seen me, and know that it is false, in Heaven's name leave me, Jaques, for I want repose.'

"'No, Diana, for if he be not here now, there is still time for him to come, and I wish to convict them altogether of falsehood.'

"'Then you will remain?'

"'I will, madam. If you are ill, go and sleep, and I will watch.'

"'But by what right do you do this, monsieur? Am I not still free?'

"'No, madam, you are not free to render a gentleman, whose hand you have accepted, the laughing-stock of the court.'

"'I do not accept your pretensions, monsieur. You have no more right to remain here, than others have to laugh. You are not my husband yet——'

"'Oh, Diana,' cried the count passionately, what do I care for their laughter. Mon Dieu! that is not the question, it is not my honour which cries out the loudest, it is my love. If I had been offended by the mockery of these fools, I could have drawn my sword, but my heart was wounded, and I came here. I love you, and I am jealous—you have said and proved to me that you love me, and I will kill whoever shall attack that love, which is my right—if it were the dauphin or the king himself. As sure as I live I will have revenge.'

"'And for what, and why?' asked, suddenly, an imperious voice behind him.

"Pierrot trembled, for through the half-lighted corridor he had seen the dauphin advance.

"'Ah!' cried Madame de Poitiers, sinking on a chair, 'this is what I feared.'

"M. de Montgomery turned round and uttered a cry; then Pierrot heard him say, in a calm voice, 'Monseigneur—one word, I entreat. Tell me that you are not here because you love Madame de Poitiers, and because she loves you.'

"'M. de Montgomery,' replied the dauphin, stifling his passion, 'will you give me the same assurance?'

"'I am the accepted lover of Madame de Poitiers, and you know it,' replied M. de Montgomery, omitting, already, the title of the dauphin.

"'A forgotten promise,' cried Henri, 'and if my

rights are more recent than yours, they are not the less certain; and I will maintain them.'

"'Oh! he speaks of his rights,' cried the count, mad with rage and jealousy. 'You dare to say that this lady is yours?'

"'I say at least that she is not yours, and that I am here with her consent, which is, I think, more than you can say. Therefore, monsieur, I wait impatiently for you to retire.'

"'If you are so impatient, let us retire together.'

"'A challenge!' cried M. de Montmorency, advancing. 'You dare! monsieur, to the dauphin of France.'

"'There is no dauphin here. There is only a man who pretends to the love of the woman that I love.'

"Then Madame de Poitiers cried, 'He insults the prince! He will kill the prince! Help!' and probably embarrassed by her situation, she ran into her own room, calling, on her way, for the escort of Monsieur le Dauphin.

"'Oh!' cried the count, 'it is then with the swords of his servants that the dauphin fights.'

"'No, monsieur,' replied Henri, 'mine will suffice to chastise this insolence,' and he put his hand to his sword.

"M. de Montmorency interfered, however, saying, 'Pardon, monseigneur, but he who might be king, to-morrow, has no right to risk his life thus. You are not a man, but a king; and a dauphin of France must only fight for France.'

"'But then,' said the count, 'a dauphin of France must not tear from me all that I care for in life—that which is more to me than my honour—than my country—than my child in the cradle; for this woman has made me forget all these. Monseigneur, pardon my violence, and tell me that I have been mistaken. You would not surely come to see a woman you loved, accompanied by M. de Montmorency, and a guard—I should have thought of that.'

"'I followed the prince this evening, with an escort,

because we were warned that an ambush would be laid for him.'

"'Ah, doubtless the same kind friends who warned me, instigated, no doubt, by Madame d'Étampes, who wished publicly to scandalise Madame de Poitiers. Certainly, to have a guard waiting outside was to make the affair public enough. Ah! Henri de Valois, then you proclaim her publicly for yours! There is no more doubt nor hope—you have stolen her from me, and with her my happiness. But, Henri de Valois, because you are a king's son, that is no reason why you should cease to be a gentleman; and if you refuse me satisfaction, you are a coward.'

"'Villain!' cried the dauphin, drawing his sword; but M. de Montmorency threw himself once more before him, and cried, 'Monseigneur, in my presence, you shall never cross your sword with a subject.'

"'With a gentleman more noble than yourself,' cried the count; 'the Montgomeries have been sufficiently often allied to the House of France to make it no disgrace for the dauphin to fight with one of them. Oh! monseigneur, if you loved this woman as I love her, or hated me as I do you—but no—you are but a timid child, happy to hide behind your tutor.'

"'Let me fight, Montmorency,' cried the dauphin, furiously.

"'No, paques Dieu! I will not let you fight with this madman. Help, here!' cried he, opening the door.

"Then Madame de Poitiers came out, and cried also, 'Help! will you let your master be murdered?'

"The escort ran up, and M. de Montmorency cried, 'Bind this madman;' and the prince added, 'Do not kill him.'

"The count was seized and disarmed by the six men who had entered, and Pierrot saw that his assistance was now unavailing, and that it was better to keep himself free to act as occasion served. The count, when bound, still cried, 'Did I not say that it was your soldiers' swords that you would oppose to mine?'

"'You hear! M. de Montmorency,' cried the prince, trembling with rage.

"'Let him be gagged,' said Montmorency. 'I will send word what to do with him. Till then keep him carefully,' and, drawing the dauphin with him, they went into the room where Madame de Poitiers was waiting. Pierrot followed, and listened at the door."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHERE A WOMAN PROVES THAT A MAN IS NOT LOVED BY HER.

"WHEN the prince entered the apartments of Madame de Poitiers, his wounded self-love was the first thing to speak. 'It is at your house, and through you,' cried he, 'that I have received my first insult.'

"'Alas! yes, at my house, but do not say through me. Have I not suffered as much, or more than you? Am I not innocent of all this? I do not love this man—I have never loved him. I love but you, monseigneur, and my life is devoted entirely to you. Formerly, certainly, I may have given this man some vague hopes, but nothing positive—no engagement; and when you came, I forgot all else. Since that time, I swear to you, there has not been a thought of mind, nor a pulsation of my heart, that has not been for you. This Montgomery lies—he acts in concert with my enemies, and has no rights over her who belongs solely to you. Not only I do not love him, but now I hate him. See—I do not even ask you if he be alive or dead.'

"'Is this all true?' asked the dauphin, still hardly convinced.

"We will put it to the proof," said M. de Montmorency. 'M. de Montgomery lives, but he is bound and incapable of resistance. He has grievously offended the prince, but it is not a crime for which we can judge him publicly. On the other hand, for M. le Dauphin to meet him in single combat is still

more impossible. What, then, is your advice, madam? What shall we do with this man?'

"There was a moment's silence; Madame de Poitiers possibly had a struggle with herself before she spoke, but at last she said, 'M. de Montgomery has been guilty of high treason. What is the punishment for that?'

"'Death,' replied M. de Montmorency.

"'Then let him die,' said she, coldly.

"All shuddered, and M. de Montmorency said, 'Indeed, madam, you do not love this man.'

"'But,' said the dauphin, 'I do not wish him to die.'

"'That is also my opinion, monseigneur,' said Montmorency, 'although probably not for the same reasons. What you utter from generosity, I recommend through prudence. M. de Montgomery has powerful friends, and it is known to several that he was to meet us here to-night. If he be loudly demanded to-morrow, we do not wish to have a corpse to show. We must say that M. de Montgomery has fled, or that he is wounded; but we must always be able to say that he lives. If we manage thus, they will talk of him for a few days, but before a month has passed he will be forgotten; friends soon forget. He must not die, but he must disappear.'

"'So be it,' said the dauphin. 'He has friends in England—let him go there.'

"'Not so, monseigneur; exile is not enough. Do you wish him to tell in England how he has insulted you?'

"'Oh, do not recall that.'

"'But I must recall it, to prevent you from committing an imprudence. The governor of the Châtelet is my friend, and devoted to his majesty, and will be deaf and dumb as the prison walls—let M. de Montgomery be taken there this night; a good cell will keep him safe, and if there be an outcry, the register of the Châtelet will show that he, accused of high treason, awaits in prison the judgment on his

crime. Then, if the prison prove unhealthy, and he die before the trial, that will not be our blame.'

"'Oh, M. de Montmorency!' cried the dauphin—

"'Be easy, monseigneur; we shall not have to proceed to such extremities. The inquiries will die away of themselves, his friends will forget him, and he may live in the prison, though dead to the world.'

"'But has he not a son?'

"'Yes, a child, whom they will tell that his father's fate is uncertain, and who, if he grow up, will have his own interests to attend to, and will not seek to explore a history fifteen or twenty years old.'

"'That is a very good plan,' said Madame de Poitiers, 'and I approve of it.'

"'But I disapprove,' cried the dauphin.

"'Monseigneur, leave all that to me. I take all the responsibility on myself——'

"'It is a crime.'

"'Well, let us not be precipitate. Let us assure ourselves of the person of the count, and we can afterwards decide how it is best to dispose of him."

"'So be it,' said the dauphin, whose feeble will gladly accepted this compromise.

"'Let us, then, return to the Louvre. To-morrow I will send him back to you,' he continued, addressing Diana, 'for I see that you really love him.'

"'Is monseigneur the dauphin also convinced?' said she.

"'Yes, you love me, Diana—terribly indeed; and I need to believe it. I should feel too much grief in losing you—your love is necessary to my existence.'

"'Oh! you make me happy,' cried Diana, with a passionate accent, kissing the hand which the prince held out to her.

"'Au revoir, Diana.'

"'Au revoir, Henri.'

"While the dauphin went down, M. de Montmorency opened the door of the oratory, and said to the men who guarded the count, 'I will send some one to you immediately who will tell you what to do with your

prisoner. Till then, watch him well—you answer for him with your lives.'

"'I will watch,' said Madame de Poitiers, from her room."

CHAPTER XX.

A USELESS DEVOTION

"PIERROT saw that his master was lost, beyond redemption, if he allowed M. de Montmorency's messenger time to return. He had remarked, however, that no intimation had been given to those who guarded the count by which they should recognise the messenger, so after waiting a short time he went up. and knocked at the door.

"'Who is there?' asked a voice from the inside.

"'From M. de Montmorency,' he answered. They opened the door, and Pierrot entered boldly. 'I am,' said he, 'the squire of M. de Manffol; we were returning from the Louvre, when we met M. de Montmorency, accompanied by a tall young man, wrapped in a cloak. After some minutes' conversation, M. de Montmorency gave me some instructions, which I am here to fulfil, but you must first let me speak in private to the prisoner, so remove the gag.'

"The man hesitated, and said, 'Have you no written order?'

"'How could they write in the street? Besides, M. de Montmorency said that he had told you to expect me.'

"'That is true.'

"'Then let me speak to him. Withdraw out of hearing for a few minutes.'

"He was obeyed. 'My brave Pierrot,' said the count, 'how do you come to be here?'

"'I will tell you, monsieur, at another time; but

now the moments are precious.' He then rapidly explained to the count his intended fate, and that he was there to frustrate the designs of his enemies.

"'But what can we do? We are but two against eight.'

"'Let me act, and you are saved.'

"'Alas! I care little; Diana betrays me, and loves me no longer.'

"'Think of your child, monsieur.'

"'You are right, Pierrot, I have not thought sufficiently of him. But if you fail in saving me, I do not wish to bequeath to him the heritage of my misfortunes, and to leave to him the same enemies who crush me; I wish him to grow up happy. Therefore, swear to me, Pierrot, never to reveal to him my unhappy fate.'

"'I swear, monsieur,' said Pierrot; 'and now let me act.' Then, turning to the guard, he said, 'I am satisfied with my examination of the prisoner; untie him, and let him go.'

"'Let him go! M. de Montmorency ordered us to guard him safely, on the peril of our lives.'

"'Do you refuse to obey me, who come in his name?'

"'I hesitate to do that, certainly.'

"'So be it, then; but you must answer to M. de Montmorency for your disobedience, I wash my hands of it.'

"'Are you certain that it was M. de Montmorency, and that those were his orders?'

"'Fool! how should I have known that you were guarding a prisoner if he had not told me?'

"'Well, then, I suppose we must unbind him;' and they had commenced doing so, when Madame de Poitiers, hearing the sound of voices, appeared at the door, and seeing what they were about, cried out,—

"'How dare you unbind the prisoner?'

"'We are obeying the orders of M. de Montmorency, madam.'

"'Impossible! Who brought you this order?

"They pointed to Pierrot, who had been trying to keep out of sight.

"'That man!' cried she; 'he is the squire of the prisoner. See what you were about to do.'

"'It is false,' said Pierrot; 'I am the squire of M. de Manffol, and I am sent by M. de Montmorency.'

"'Who says that he comes from M. de Montmorency?' said a man, who entered the room at that moment. 'I am sent by him, and here is his ring to show it. What! you have dared to unbind the prisoner? Let him be rebound and gagged immediately.'

"The count never spoke, but Pierrot cried, 'Good, madam, you go far in the path of infamy. Three times within an hour you have betrayed your lover.'

"'Seize that man!' cried she, furiously.

"Pierrot rushed towards his master, and began to cut the new bonds with which he was tied, crying, 'Let us sell our lives dearly monsieur!' But he had only time to free the count's left arm, before a violent blow laid him senseless at the feet of his master."

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW THE TRACE OF BLOOD IS NEVER EFFACED.

"Pierrot knew no more. When he returned to consciousness, his first sensation was of intense cold, and, opening his eyes, he found himself on the damp ground. It was still night, but there was sufficient light to show him that he was in the Cemetery des Innocents. They had doubtless thought him dead, and thrown him there.

"He tried to rise, but the pain of his wound was intense. However, by a great effort, he contrived to

walk a few paces, and gradually reached the street. There he saw a waggoner going by, and he asked him to allow him to sit by him. The man consented; and in this way he came nearly up to our house in the Rue des Jardins, and when he at last reached home, it was six o'clock in the morning. In spite of the cold, my anxiety had kept me watching at the window all night, and as soon as I saw my husband coming I ran down to open the door.

"'Silence! on your life!' said he to me; 'utter no cry, but help me to my room.' He got up-stairs with my assistance; but when I began to undress him his blood covered my hands, and I saw his wounds large and gaping.

"'Hush!' said he again; 'do not cry out.'

"'But at least let me go for a surgeon,' said I, sobbing.

"'It is useless,' said he; 'I know that my wounds are mortal, I should not have lived so long had I not been upheld by a feeling stronger than pain. God, who sooner or later punishes murderers, has doubtless prolonged my life so far to serve his future designs; but soon fever will come on, and then no doctor can do anything for me.'

"I begged him at least to spare himself and take a little repose.

"'No,' replied he; 'I must speak while I can.' Then he told me all that I have just related to you, but not without frequent and long interruptions from weakness and pain. Towards the middle of the day the pain seemed to leave him; then he made me repeat the oath that he had taken not to reveal to you this history, as long as there was danger for you in it. This oath, monsieur, I have just broken, but it was to save your life, and I trust that I shall be pardoned.

"'When I am dead,' continued Pierrot, 'shut up this house, dismiss the servants, and go to Montgomery with Gabriel, but do not live at the castle; bring him up quietly in our own house, so that

his enemies may forget him; the chaplain and the steward will aid you in your task. Let the young count himself be ignorant of his rank until he be eighteen.' Then he told me that M. de Montmorency supposed him to be dead, and therefore he desired me to keep his presence there, and his death, both secret; to tell no one of his being there, and in the dead of night, when all were asleep, to carry his body down to the caves of the lords of Brissac, to whom the hotel formerly belonged, that in this way M. de Montmorency would believe the secret dead with him, whereas, if he knew me to be privy to it, he would not hesitate to destroy me as well.

"I promised all he asked. Towards evening fever came on, then he said to me, 'Aloyse, give me some water.' I, in my ignorance, had offered him some repeatedly, but he always refused. I got him some then, but before drinking it, he said, 'One last kiss, and remember all I have said.' I covered his face with my kisses and tears; then he asked for the crucifix, and placing it to his lips murmured, 'My God, have mercy on me!' and fell back dead.

"I went as usual to see you put to bed, and although I wept incessantly no one was astonished for all were in consternation at the disappearance of the count and Pierrot. About two in the morning, after having washed the blood from my husband's corpse I wrapped it in a sheet, and descended with my dear burden, still heavier to my heart than to my arms, and it was not without great difficulty and many stoppages that I reached the cave. I found an empty tomb in which I placed the body. The fall of the heavy lid as I reclosed it struck such terror to my heart that I turned and fled and never stopped until I arrived in my own room. I had still to burn the sheets and the clothes, which might have betrayed us, but by daylight my task was completed.

"A long illness followed so much exertion and emotion on my part, but as soon as I was able to travel I went to Montgomery with you as I had promised.

What M. de Montmorency had foreseen happened. For a time every one talked of the mysterious disappearance of the Comte de Montgomery, but new subjects and interests succeeded, and it was forgotten."

"Well," cried Gabriel, "all this tells me nothing as to who Diana is. But if my father lives I will find him. It is now both the son and the lover who is seeking. But have you never learned anything which could indicate the prison in which my father was confined?"

"Nothing, monsieur, but that M. de Montmorency said that the governor of the Châtelet was a devoted friend of his."

"The Châtelet!" cried Gabriel, bursting into tears, the remembrance of the miserable old man, whom he had seen there in that horrid cell flashed suddenly across his mind.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HEROIC RANSOM.

On the following day, Gabriel took his way with a firm step, and a calm aspect, to the Louvre, to ask for an audience of the king. After deep consideration he had decided that defiance towards a crowned enemy would be worse than useless, and he had resolved to make his request humbly and respectfully.

As he entered he met the Cardinal de Lorraine, who addressed him in a friendly way, and asked him whither he was going. On Gabriel replying, "to the king," he replied that he also was going to see his majesty, and would conduct him, "although," he added, "the king has very much to occupy him. I suppose, M. d'Exmès, you have heard the sad news?"

"No, indeed, I know nothing."

"Really! well, M. de Montmorency, the skilful general, encountered the Spanish troops yesterday on the plains of Gibercourt; and although he had an equal number of men, admirable cavalry, and the élite of the French chivalry he has sustained a dreadful defeat. He himself is wounded and taken prisoner, and with him numbers of other nobles."

"Great heavens!" cried Gabriel, struck in spite of his private griefs by this public misfortune, "and St. Quentin?"

"It still held out at the departure of the courier, and M. de Coligny has sworn to be buried under the ruins rather than surrender; but it is feared that he cannot maintain himself much longer."

"But what would become of France?"

"God only knows—but here we are."

They entered, and found the king alone with Madame de Poitiers.

"Ah! M. de Lorraine," said he, "what a frightful catastrophe, who could have dreamed of it? Your brother is on his way home is he not?"

"Yes, sire; he is at Lyons."

"Oh! if he were but here. In his hands and yours I place the salvation of France. Write to him, M. le Cardinal, and explain to him our dreadful condition. Pray write at once. In this cabinet is all you want. A courier waits below ready to carry your letter."

"I obey, your majesty, and be sure that my brother will be equally ready, and will do all that man can do; but if he fail let your majesty remember how desperate the affairs are that are placed in his hands."

Gabriel had remained standing, his young and generous heart profoundly touched by the extremity to which France was reduced; and when the king cried, "Oh! if St. Quentin — my good city—could but hold out for eight days, M. de Guise would be here, and all would yet be well; but if it falls the enemy will march direct to Paris. I would give a

diamond for each of its stones if they would hold out."

"Sire, it shall hold out for more than eight days!" exclaimed Gabriel.

"M. d'Exmès! how came you here?"

"I came with the Cardinal de Lorraine, sire."

"Oh! that is quite right. But what do you mean by saying that it shall resist."

"Sire, if a man were to defend this city, and his energetic will were to inspire the garrison to resist while one stone remained on another, and were he thus to save France would you promise to grant him one request?"

"Certainly," cried Henri, "what a king could do for him I would."

"It is a bargain, sire; for it is simply a pardon that I ask for, and neither titles nor gold."

"But where is the man who can do this?"

"Before you, sire. I am a simple Captain of your Guards, but I feel in my arm a superhuman energy, for I have to save at once my country and my father."

"Your father! M. d'Exmès."

"I am not M. d'Exmès, sire; I am Gabriel de Montgomery, son of Jacques de Montgomery whom you remember."

The king turned deadly pale, as did also Madame de Poitiers.

"Yes, sire," continued Gabriel, "I am the Vicomte de Montgomery, who in exchange for preserving St. Quentin to you for eight days asks only the liberty of his father."

"Your father, monsieur, has disappeared, and is probably dead. What do I know of him?"

"But I know, sire. My father has been eighteen years in the Châtelet waiting for death, or for mercy. Whatever his crime may have been (of which I am ignorant) surely he has expiated it sufficiently. He went into prison a young man, and would come out, old and feeble, and incapable of injuring any one.

Oh! sire, restore to this poor prisoner a life which he would henceforth pass in obscurity. Remember, sire, that we are ordained to forgive if we would be forgiven."

The king and Madame de Poitiers exchanged a look of terror, and as if to interrogate each other.

"Observe, sire," continued Gabriel, "that I do not come to say that he was condemned secretly, and without being heard, and that I do not call on all the nobility of France to aid me in procuring redress. I respect the privileges of the Crown, and the secrets of the past; and I only ask permission to preserve St. Quentin for you. Surely, sire, that is worth an old man's liberty; and I feel that I can do it, for my cause is pure and holy, my will is strong, and I feel that God is with me. If you require it I will even undertake to wrest a city from the enemy."

Madame de Poitiers gave an incredulous smile.

"I understand your smile, madam. You think that I shall fall before I accomplish my task. Mon Dieu! it is possible. My presentiments may deceive me. But if the enemy enter before the eight days I will die on the breach. I can do no more. I shall die on the field, and my father in his cell—the debt will be cancelled, and the creditor be forgotten."

"That is true," whispered Diana to the king.

"But, monsieur, if you fall, leaving your task unaccomplished, how do I know that some one else will not start up, armed with this secret, and make the same request?"

"I swear to you, sire, that were I dead all would die with me, and you would never be again importuned on the subject."

Henri, always undecided, turned towards Diana for advice.

"Sire," said she, "if you ask for my advice, agree to what M. d'Exmès asks, and pass your royal word to grant his request if he keeps his promise."

"Allow me first to ask you, monsieur, how you became possessed of this secret."

"Sire," said Gabriel, solemnly, "an old squire of my father's—Pierrot Travigny—who was killed in the events which led to the disappearance of the count, rose from his grave to tell me,"

At this answer, the king turned paler than before, and even Madame de Poitiers shuddered. The belief in apparitions and spectres was at that time universal, and their uneasy consciences soon took alarm.

"Enough, monsieur," said the king, "I grant all you ask. You may now retire."

"Then I may set out, relying on your majesty's promise?"

"Yes, I give you my word as a king and a gentleman."

Gabriel, with joy in his heart, bowed and retired.

"At last he is gone," said Henri, with a sigh of relief.

"Well, sire," said Diana, "you did right to promise him, and to send him to St. Quentin—he is sure to fall there."

At this moment the Cardinal de Lorraine returned with the letter for his brother, and the king could not reply.

Gabriel, when he left the king, directed his steps towards Madame de Castro's old apartments, hoping to find some one there who could give him some information regarding her. Jacinthe had gone with her mistress, but Denise, the second maid, had remained, and as soon as she saw Gabriel she cried,—

"Oh! M. d'Exmès, do you bring me news of my mistress? We are so anxious about her."

"And why so, Denise?"

"Oh, monsieur, do you not know where she is?" She is in the convent of the Benedictines at St. Quentin, now besieged, and perhaps taken by the Spaniards."

"Surely," thought Gabriel, "the finger of God is in this, He ever animates my feelings as a son by

means of those of a lover. Thanks! Denise! here is something for your good news."

He went down quickly to the court of the Louvre, where Martin Guerre waited for him. "We are going to St. Quentin, Martin," said he. "We are going where they fight, and must set off at once."

"Oh, so much the better; I may have become a drinker and a gambler, but I am not a coward!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

JEAN PEUQUOY THE WEAVER.

The military chiefs and principal bourgeois of St. Quentin were assembled in the town-hall. The city still held out, but the despair of the inhabitants was at its height, and they began to say, "That as it was impossible to save the city—as it was only a question of a day or two, more or less, it was better to abridge their sufferings." Gaspard de Coligny, the brave admiral, thought differently. He knew that each day might be the saving of the kingdom, but he could do little against the general discouragement and discontent. This meeting was his last effort to try and inspirit further resistance.

He began by an appeal to their patriotism, but this was received with a mournful silence. Then he turned to Captain Oger, one of his bravest officers, and asked for his opinion, trusting that he would support him.

"If you do me the honour to ask for my opinion, monsieur," replied he, "I must say, with regret, but with perfect conviction, that St. Quentin can resist no longer. If we could hold out for a week—for four, or even two days—I should say that these two days would give time to the army to rally, and might save the country, and we will hold out to the last stone and the last man. But I am convinced that the next assault must be successful. Is it not then preferable

to save what we can of the city by a capitulation, while there is yet time?"

"Yes, yes," cried many voices.

"You speak, Lauxford," said M. de Coligny, to the officer commanding the engineers. "Tell us honestly —can the fortifications hold out longer or not?"

"Monsieur, four breaches are already made; one large enough to admit twenty men—and we have already lost two hundred men there. The rest of the walls are sound, but these four breaches are, I fear, four mortal wounds, for which there is no remedy."

The murmurs became louder than ever on the strength of this opinion, when suddenly a voice of thunder cried, "Silence!"

All were immediately silent, for they recognised the voice of Jean Peuquoy, the head of the corporation of weavers, and a much respected citizen.

"Listen to me, my dear friends and fellow-citizens," said he. "M. de Coligny will, I hope, do us the justice to acknowledge that from the first we have done our best to assist him. We have given our provisions, our goods, and our money, and we have not been backward in fighting ourselves. We trusted that our king would think of his brave Quentinois, and send us aid. He did so. He sent M. de Montmorency, and we thanked God and the king, but the fatal battle of St. Laurent destroyed our hopes. The constable was taken, and his army forced to retreat. It is now five days since that battle, and the enemy have made the most of their time—their cannon has scarcely ceased to sound—indeed, you may hear it now. We have listened vainly for some sound from the other side, announcing to us further assistance, but none comes. Our resources are exhausted, but the king has the whole monarchy to save. If he thinks of us, it is only to ask if we shall live long enough to save the rest of France. But there is no chance of help, nor is there any salvation for us—our walls and our soldiers fall around us—we are lost!"

"Yes! yes! we must yield!" they all cried with one voice.

"Not so," replied Jean Peuquoy; "we must die. MM. Lauxford and Oger say that we cannot resist, but M. de Coligny says that we ought to resist. Let us resist. You know, citizens, whether I love our good city or not; how devoted I am to her; but the general has, in his wisdom, weighed the fortunes of St. Quentin against those of all France, and he has pronounced it right that she should die like a sentinel at his post. He who murmurs is a coward! and he who disobeys is a traitor! If the walls fall, we must make new ones with our bodies. Let us gain two days—even an hour, at the price of our lives and our goods, for M. de Coligny declares that it may save France. The responsibility is on him—our duty is to die, when he tells us that we die for France."

All were silent.

"You do not reply. You will give your lives to the king, and will leave your wives widows, and your children orphans; but you cannot yourselves pronounce their doom. At least you can cry, 'Vive la France?'"

A few faint cries responded, but sadly and mournfully.

Gaspard de Coligny then rose in much agitation. "Listen!" said he. "I cannot accept this fearful responsibility; and, since you are all against me, I also think your sacrifice would be useless——"

"What! are you also going to speak of surrender, M. de Coligny?" interrupted a voice.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GABRIEL AT HIS WORK.

"Who dares to interrupt me thus?" cried M. de Coligny. "A peasant!"

"I," said a man, advancing, clothed like a peasant

of the neighbourhood. "Not a peasant, but the Vicomte d'Exmès, captain of the king's guards, who comes here in his majesty's name."

"In the king's name!" cried many voices.

"Yes, in the name of the king, who does not abandon his brave Quentinois, but thinks of them ever. I arrived in this disguise three hours ago, and in this time I have examined your defences and heard your deliberations. But what I have seen does not correspond with what I have heard. Whence comes this sudden discouragement, fit only for women and children, and which has caused a universal panic? Raise your heads, and revive your courage! and if you cannot conquer, let your defeat be more glorious than a victory! I come from your ramparts, and I say that you can hold out another fortnight, but the king asks only a week to save France.

"Let me come to your aid," he continued. "You, M. de Lauxford, say that you have four breaches open to the enemy. Well, that on the side of the Faubourg d'Isle is the worst. The Spaniards are masters of the abbey, and keep up so brisk a fire, that our workmen dare not show themselves. Allow me to suggest a simple and very excellent method which I saw adopted at Civitella. We will make a rampart with old boats filled with earth—the balls lose themselves in the earth, and our workmen can proceed in perfect safety.

"At the hamlet of Remicourt, the enemy are undermining the wall, it is true; but it is there, monsieur, that we must countermine, and not at the Porte St. Jean, where it is not only useless, but dangerous. You should move your men from the west to the south. You will say, that the Porte St. Jean and the Boulevard St. Martin will be left defenceless. But fifty men at each point will suffice to protect them. You may say again, that you cannot spare these one hundred men. Well, I bring them to you."

A murmur of surprise and joy ran round the circle.

"Yes," continued Gabriel, "I met, not farfrom

here, the Baron de Vaulpergues with three hundred lances, and he has promised to come to your assistance. I undertook to come here, braving all danger, through the enemy's camp, to reconnoitre the places where he may most safely enter with his men. I have come and arranged my plan. I shall return to Vaulpergues—we shall divide his company into three parts. I myself will take the command of one, and we will each direct our steps, under cover of the night, to a different point. It will be very unlucky if we do not manage to introduce at least one hundred men into the place."

Universal acclamations hailed his spirited address, which reanimated all hearts.

"Oh!" cried Jean Peuquoy, "now we can fight and conquer."

"Fight! yes," said Gabriel; "conquer, I do not dare to hope; I do not wish to make your position better than it is; I only wish to show you that the king does not abandon you, and that you may make your resistance useful, and your defeat glorious. It is probable that the 60,000 men who attack you, will take the place at last, but do not think that your brave resistance will make your position worse in the end. Philibert Emanuel is a brave soldier, who loves courage, and will not punish it, and if you hold out for ten or twelve days, you will have saved France. Your children's children will be proud of you. The enemy may destroy your walls, but they cannot destroy the memory of your courage. Cry then with me, 'Vive la France!'"

"Vive la France! Vive le roi!" cried a hundred voices with enthusiasm.

"And now," continued Gabriel, "to the ramparts, and reanimate by your example those who await you there; to-morrow another one hundred men shall join you."

"To the ramparts!" they echoed as they rushed off to communicate their new-born hopes and enthusiasms to the rest of the inhabitants.

Gaspard de Coligny, the worthy and generous chief,

had listened in astonishment and admiration. He now advanced towards Gabriel, and cried, "Thanks, monsieur; you have saved St. Quentin and me from shame, and the king and France from destruction."

"Alas! I have done nothing yet, monsieur. I must now return to Vaulpergues, and God only knows whether I shall go out in safety as I came in, and succeed in introducing my men."

CHAPTER XXV.

WHERE MARTIN GUERRE IS UNFORTUNATE.

Gabriel and the admiral talked together for some time, and arranged the best method of introducing the troops, and they parted with mutual esteem and admiration.

Gabriel's next care was to learn something of Diana. He had asked the name of the superior of the convent, and had heard that it was La mère Monique. Then he asked where he could find her. "In the post where there is the most danger," was the reply. He found her indeed at the Faubourg d'Isle, and she received him as the saviour of the city.

"You will not be surprised, madam," said he, "that coming from the king, I ask for news of his daughter, Madame de Castro. She is well, I trust?"

"Yes, M. le Vicomte, but I insisted upon her remaining in the convent to take some rest to-day, for none of us have equalled her in courage and devotedness. She was always ready, and to be found everywhere exercising her kindly charities. She is truly a worthy daughter of France. It has been her wish that her rank should not be known here, and she calls herself by the name of our order, Sister Benedicta; but our patients, who do not know Latin, call her Sister Benie."

"Can I see her to-morrow if I return?" asked Gabriel.

"You will return, my brother; and wherever you hear the loudest cries and groans, there you will find Sister Benie."

Gabriel went away with a heart filled with fresh hope and courage.

Favoured by the night, he and Martin Guerre passed noiselessly through the breach, and escaped into the open country; but they were not yet out of danger. Detachments of the enemy scoured the country night and day, and any rencontre with them might be fatal. They came presently to a place where there were two roads.

"Martin," said Gabriel, "here are two roads, which each lead to the wood d'Angimont, where the Baron de Vaulpergues waits for us. If we remain together, we may both be taken, but separate, we double our chances of success. You take this road, it is the longest, but M. de Coligny thinks it the safest. Still you must pass the encampment of the Walloons, where M. de Montmorency is a prisoner. If you meet any troops, pass yourself off for a peasant of Angimont, returning after having delivered provisions to the Spaniards at St. Quentin. Imitate as well as you can the patois of Picardy—that is not difficult with strangers. Err rather on the side of impudence than that of hesitation. If you hesitate, you are lost."

"Oh, be easy, monsieur, I shall manage well."

"I," said Gabriel, "will go this way, for being the direct road to Paris, it is the most dangerous. I may never arrive, but do not let them wait for me more than half an hour. You know what is to be done—the troops are to be divided into two detachments, and each are to advance by a different road. We cannot hope to succeed with all, but the loss of one may save the others. Adieu, my brave Martin. We may never meet again; give me your hand, and may God protect you!"

"Oh! monsieur, I pray most for you—I am not good for much. Take care of yourself, monsieur."

So the master and squire separated. At first all went well with Martin, but as he approached the

camp, the sentinels were numerous. All at once he found himself between two troops of men—one of horse, and the other of foot soldiers, and a loud "Qui vive," showed him that he had been observed. "Now," thought he, "the time has come, to show the impudence that my master recommended to me;" so he began to sing in a loud voice.

"Who goes there?" cried a voice.

"A peasant of Angimont," answered Martin, imitating the patois, and he recommenced his song.

"Stop that infernal song, and halt," cried the same voice.

Martin knew that resistance was useless, so he stopped. "By St. Quentin," said he, "why do you wish to stop a poor peasant, already detained too late, and who wants to get home to his wife and his little ones?"

"How do we know that you are not a spy? You must go with us to the camp."

"To the camp—well, so much the better, for I will speak to the chief. Ah, you arrest an unlucky peasant, who has been carrying provisions to your comrades before St. Quentin; I'll be hanged if ever I do so again; all your army may starve first. But I will complain to the general—I have done no harm, and shall be rewarded, and you will be punished."

"Comrade," said another, "I think he speaks the truth."

"I would let him go immediately, but that I cannot help thinking that I recognise him, even by this imperfect light. We shall see clearly at the camp." So Martin was placed between two soldiers and taken with them.

The moment the light of the torches fell on his face, the man who had spoken before, cried out, "Par le diable! I was right. It is really that wretch. Comrades, do you not recognise him?"

"Oh, yes! yes!" cried one after another.

"You recognise me?" cried poor Martin, who began to be seriously alarmed. "I am Martin Cornouiller, of Angimont; now let me go."

"Let you go, wretch! villain!"

"For whom do you take me, then?"

"It is Arnold du Thill," cried a dozen voices, with frightful unanimity.

"Arnold du Thill! who is that?" said Martin.

"Oh! deny yourself," said the first speaker; "of course you are not the coward who promised me a ransom, and whom I treated so well, and who last night fled, carrying away all my money, and my dear little Gudule. Wretch! what have you done with Gudule?"

"What have I done with her?" cried poor Martin. "Oh, I give myself up, if my aliases are beginning again. I can say no more; do what you like with me, at all events I am glad to know that I am called Arnold du Thill." And he attempted no further remonstrances or resistance, and as he could not say what had become of Gudule, they kept him prisoner.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RUSES DE GUERRE.

When Gabriel, after many escapes, entered the wood where the Baron de Vaulpergues waited for him, the first person he saw, was, as he thought, Martin Guerre.

"So it is you, Martin?" he said.

"Myself, monsieur."

"How long have you arrived?"

"About an hour ago."

"Really—but it seems to me that you have changed your dress since we parted."

"Yes, monsieur; I changed with a peasant, thinking his dress more likely to escape detection than my own."

"Good; and did you have no dangerous adventures."

"None, monsieur."

"On the contrary," said the Baron de Vaulpergues,

"he came here accompanied by a very pretty girl, apparently a Flemish vivandière. She was crying, the poor little thing, but he sent her away, remorselessly."

"Oh! Martin, Martin; here is the old man reappearing."

"Say rather, the young one," replied he. "But pardon, monsieur; you have something more serious to occupy yourself with than my concerns."

"Well," said the baron, "my advice is, not to start for half-an-hour. It is not yet twelve o'clock, and I do not wish to arrive at St. Quentin before three o'clock in the morning. It is the best time for a surprise."

"Just so, monsieur; that is M. de Coligny's advice. We are to arrive at three in the morning if we reach St. Quentin at all."

"Oh! we shall get there, monsieur," said Arnold, "I profited by going through the camp of the Walloons, and undertake to guide you through it with perfect safety."

"That is wonderful, Martin; in so short a time to observe so much."

We must now explain the adventures of Arnold du Thill.

After having escaped—thanks to Gudule—from the enemy's camp, they had wandered in the woods for some time, fearing to fall again into their hands. Towards night, he came upon a party of Frenchmen, and joined them. Then he dismissed poor Gudule, who returned, weeping, to the camp. As for Arnold, they all saluted him as Martin Guerre, and asked after his master. By listening to all that was said, and saying as little as possible, he picked up sufficient of what was going on, not to betray himself; and by the time that the Vicomte d'Exmès arrived was quite au fait as to the state of affairs. He only feared to see Gabriel arrive with his squire, and was considering what he should do, when, to his great delight, he saw him approach alone. Then he abandoned himself to chance, and guessing that Martin had fallen

into the hands of the Spaniards, he audaciously took his place.

In the city the anxiety was great; for the safety or ruin of all depended upon the success of Gabriel's attempt. The admiral, unable to sleep, wandered about the places where the attack was about to be made. Just as three o'clock struck, he heard the cry of an owl.

"God be thanked! here they are," said he, and the signal was responded to.

For some minutes after there was a dead silence. Then suddenly came the sound of fire-arms, and a general discharge followed. The first detachment had been discovered.

"A hundred brave men killed," cried Coligny, and without saying more, he ran to the Boulevard St. Martin, where one of the other detachments was expected. The same cry was heard, replied to and followed by the same alarm and general skirmishing.

"Two hundred martyrs," cried Coligny, and he hastened to the third point. But here nothing was heard. Coligny thought, that terrified by the fate of their comrades, they had abandoned the enterprise, and a burning tear of despair and disappointment rolled over his cheek. Suddenly, however, the governor—Du Breuil, who was standing by him, pointed to some dark figures moving in the moat.

"Are they friends or enemies?" he whispered.

Coligny looked earnestly at them—then, as they approached nearer, he gave the concerted signal. It was immediately replied to, and the admiral, transported with joy, threw open the gate, and one hundred cavaliers, wrapped in black cloaks, entered with a noiseless step, which as they drew near, Coligny could account for by seeing that the feet of the horses were covered with rags.

This expedient, of which only Gabriel had thought, had saved him and his men.

One hundred men were not much, perhaps, but they would suffice to keep the enemy for a time, from

two of the breaches. The news soon circulated, and a general rejoicing was manifested. Gabriel said, gravely, "No rejoicing—think of the two hundred who have fallen."

"Yes," replied Coligny, "we think of and deplore them, but you, M. d'Exmès—how can I thank you, for you have saved St. Quentin twice?"

Gabriel pressed his hand, and said, "M. de Coligny, you shall tell me that in a few days."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ARNOLD.

Gabriel, exhausted by fatigue, slept until a late hour on the following day. It was the admiral himself who awoke him, to beg him to be present at the council about to be held.

"One word only, to my squire, and I am at your orders," he replied.

He then called for Martin, and on Arnold entering, he said,—"My good Martin, go to the Convent of the Benedictines, and ask for the superior, and beg her to tell the sister Benie that the Vicomte d'Exmès, an envoy from the king, will call to see her in an hour, and to request her to wait for him."

"Yes, monsieur," replied Arnold, and he set off at once. He asked for La mère Monique, as directed, and when she came, he said, "Ah! ma mère, I am so glad to have found you; my poor master would have been so sad, if I could not have fulfilled my commission to you, and to Madame de Castro."

"Who is your master?"

"My master is the Vicomte d'Exmès. You know him, I believe?"

"Certainly, I know our valiant deliverer; we have prayed much for him. But I hoped to have the honour of seeing him here."

"He is coming, but M. de Coligny detains him,

and in his impatience he has sent me with a message to Madame de Castro. Do not look astonished, madam; I am an old servant, and my master has no secrets from me."

"Well," said Mère Monique, "Sister Benie expects him impatiently, for she longs to hear news of her father, from whom he comes."

"Yes," said Arnold, with an affectedly foolish laugh, "who sent him to St. Quentin, but not to Madame de Castro, I warrant."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh! madam, I am so glad that you assist my dear master and Madame de Castro in their love."

"Their love!"

"Of course Madame de Castro has told you all about it. Oh! you deny it from modesty. But I think your conduct sublime, and most courageous. The king would certainly be in a towering passion if he knew that they had met."

"Mon Dieu!" cried the superior, clasping her hands in terror, "a king and a father deceived—and my name mixed up with amorous intrigues."

"And see! here comes my master himself, to see his adored Diana."

As Gabriel advanced, and before he had time to speak, the superior, with an air of great dignity, said, "Not a word, M. le Vicomte, I know now, by what right, and with what intentions, you wish to approach Madame de Castro. Do not hope that I shall lend my aid to projects which I much fear are unworthy of a gentleman. I will do my best to prevent Sister Benie from meeting you. She is free, I know, and has pronounced no vows, but as long as she remains in this asylum, I shall protect—not her love—but her honour." Then bowing coldly, she withdrew.

"What does this mean?" cried Gabriel in amazement.

"I do not know, monsieur; the superior received me very badly, and said that she knew all your designs, but that she would oppose them, and act according to the wishes of the king. And she added,

that Madame de Castro loved you no longer, if she had ever done so."

"Diana loves me uo longer!" cried Gabriel, turning pale. "But, alas! perhaps it is for the best. However, I will see her once more, and prove to her that I am neither culpable nor indifferent. You must help me, Martin, to procure the interview."

"Monsieur knows," replied Arnold, humbly, "that I am devoted to his will, and am ready to do my best to assist him." And he followed Gabriel, laughing inwardly at what he had done. On his return, he added to a list of charges which he had against the Constable de Montmorency, these items.

'For having conducted skilfully the reinforcements which M. d'Exmès was bringing to the nephew of M. de Montmorency—100 crowns.'

'For having, after entering into the service of the Vicomte d'Exmès under the name of Martin Guerre, denounced him to the superior of the convent of the Benedictines, as the lover of Madame de Castro, and thus prevented their meeting according to the wishes of M. de Montmorency—200 crowns.'

The next day Gabriel sent him again to the convent, and we may judge how he performed his mission. Gabriel would have gone himself, but at ten in the morning the enemy made a fierce assault, and he was obliged to be present at the defence. He performed prodigies of valour, and conducted himself as though he had a hundred lives to lose.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SISTER BENIE.

It was a serene and splendid evening in August, and the blue and calm sky was studded with stars, the moon having not yet risen.

This sweet tranquillity contrasted singularly with the noise and turmoil of the day. The Spaniards

had made two assaults, which had both been repulsed, but not without a heavy loss to the little garrison, which it could ill bear. The enemy, on the contrary, had powerful resources, and fresh troops to replace those who fell.

Gabriel, who had deemed that these frequent attacks were made for the purpose of exhausting the garrison preparatory to a great nocturnal assault, had been anxiously on the watch, but ten o'clock having struck, without any movement on the part of the enemy, he began to feel more at ease. Four days more, and he should have fulfilled his promise to the king.

He now directed his steps to the hospital for the wounded, for he had heard that it was the night for sister Benie to take her turn to watch there. On account of the heat of the night, all the doors were left open, and Gabriel could, from the entrance, look down the great hall where the patients were lying. The spectacle was heart-rending. There were here and there rough couches hastily put up, and covered with blood; but this luxury was only for the officers, and the greater part of the wounded men lay groaning upon mattresses, cloaks, and even straw placed on the floor.

The surgeons, with all their activity, could not attend to all, and Gabriel turned pale with horror at the frightful picture; but suddenly he smiled for he saw in the midst of the scene, Diana—or rather sister Benie—pass along, serene, though sad. Never had she looked more beautiful; the diamonds and velvet that she wore at court seemed to suit her less than the nun's dress. He stood gazing at her for a little while, and then Diana came towards the door, as if for a little fresh air.

Gabriel approached her, and said softly, "Diana."

Diana trembled, for it was nearly dark, and she could not see him. "Who spoke?" said she.

"It is I."

"You! M. d'Exmès; is it really you? what do you want of me at this hour, and in this place? If, as

they told me, you brought me news of my father, you have been very tardy in delivering it."

"Diana, your cold words cut me to the heart; but I cannot call you, 'madam,' as you call me, 'monsieur.'"

"Call me neither madam, nor Diana! it is sister Benie who is before you. Call me sister, and I will call you brother."

"I, call you sister!" cried Gabriel.

"It is the name that every one gives me now. There is nothing so dreadful in it, is there?"

"Oh, yes!—but no; it is a sweet name, and I will accustom myself to it—sister."

"Besides," said Diana, sadly, "if I am not yet a nun by vows, I am one in heart, and only await the permission of the king to become one. Do you bring it to me, Gabriel!"

"Oh!" said Gabriel, reproachfully.

"Mon Dieu!" said Diana, "it is not anger that makes me speak thus—it is grief. I have suffered so much amongst men, that I seek a refuge with God."

"Listen," said Gabriel, "this cruel misunderstanding, which tears both our hearts, must cease. I can no longer bear the thought that you believe me cold and indifferent. But come a little way from here, I pray, lest we should be overheard or interrupted. It is necessary for my reason and tranquillity."

Diana did not hesitate, but placed her hand in his. "Thanks," said he, "time is pressing, for the superior, who knows my love for you, would separate us if she saw us."

"That is the reason, then," said Diana, "why she has prevented me from going out for the last three days, and would have done so this evening, but that I insisted on coming. Oh! Gabriel, it is not right to deceive this good friend."

"Alas!" said Gabriel, "I wish to speak to you only as a brother. I must control my heart, and though I would die for you, my love must be silent."

"Speak, then, brother."

"Sister," said he, "I have two requests to make to you. You are good and generous, and will grant them to a friend who may never see you again, for a dangerous duty exposes him each hour to death."

"Oh! do not say so," cried Diana.

"I do not speak thus to terrify you, sister, but that you may not refuse me a pardon and a grace.—A pardon for all the grief I have caused you, and the terror with which I inspired you the last time I saw you in Paris; a horrible revelation—received only that day—had thrown me into despair, and almost maddened me. You remember, perhaps, that it was on quitting you that I was attacked by that illness which nearly cost me reason and life."

"Do I remember! Gabriel."

"Do not call me Gabriel, for Heaven's sake. Call me brother; this name, which distressed me at first, I now wish to hear."

"As you please, my brother," said Diana, bewildered.

At this moment, the sound of a body of troops marching, was heard, and Diana exclaimed with fear, "Who comes here? Mon Dieu! they will see us."

"It is a patrol of our men."

"Oh, let me go. They will pass close by, and will recognise me."

"No, it is too late; to fly, now, would be to show yourself. Rather come here with me. And followed by Diana, he hastily mounted a staircase hidden by a stone balustrade, which led to the ramparts. The patrol passed without seeing them.

"What a badly-protected point," thought Gabriel; then turning to Diana, he said, "Be easy, now they have passed; but you have not yet told me that you have forgiven me."

"One does not forgive fever and despair; one pities and consoles them. But I was never angry with you, I only wept, I was unhappy."

"Now Diana, for the future, you must trust to my word, and have confidence in me; for the secret which governs my actions does not belong to me. I

have sworn to keep it, and if I wish others to keep their engagements with me, I must keep mine with them."

"Explain yourself," said Diana.

"Oh!" said Gabriel, "I hesitate, because I think of that dress you wear—of the name of 'sister,' that I give to you, and I do not wish to pronounce even a word which may awaken memories too delightful—and yet I must tell you that your adored image has never been effaced or weakened in my soul, and that nothing, and no one, ever can weaken it."

"My brother," interrupted Diana, confused and pleased——

"Oh! listen to me to the end, sister. I repeat to you, that nothing can alter the ardent devotion that I feel for you; and, at least, I may always be permitted to love you—only of what nature must that love be? God only knows now, alas! but, perhaps, we shall know one day. Confident in God, and in your brother, you must let me act—hoping nothing, and yet not despairing; we must neither please ourselves with vain dreams, nor yet must we believe that all is over for us in this world. In a short time, I will either come to you, and say, 'Diana, I love you; remember our childhood, and our vows, and be mine;' or else I shall say, 'My sister, an invincible obstacle opposes our love, and will not allow us to be happy. Nothing depends upon ourselves; the obstacle between us is placed by God himself: I give you back your promise—you are free. Give yourself to another, and I shall attach no blame to you; for dear and sacred as you must ever be to me, our lives can never mingle.'"

"What a strange and dreadful enigma!" said Diana.

"This enigma, I shall then, doubtless, be able to explain to you, but, until then, you will vainly seek the key to it. Will you promise me to believe in my love, and to abandon all idea of a convent? Promise me to have faith and hope."

"Yes, faith in you, and hope in God—I can

promise. But why should I engage to return to the world, if it be not to walk then by your side? All would henceforth be darkness for me."

"Sister, I ask of you this promise to render me stronger for my work, and that I may find you free for our interview when I ask for it."

"Well, my brother, I will obey you."

"Oh! thanks, thanks. Will you give me your hand as a pledge of your promise, sister?"

"Here it is, brother."

"Oh! now I am certain to conquer!" cried the ardent young man. "I feel as if nothing can withstand me now." But at this moment, as if to give a double contradiction to his words, they heard at the same time voices crying, "Sister Benie, Sister Benie," and Gabriel thought he heard a noise from the moat.

"Oh! they call me," said Diana, "they are seeking me. Mon Dieu! if they found us together. Adieu, my brother; adieu, Gabriel."

"Au revoir, Diana. Go quickly; I will remain here."

Diana ran down and met a troop of people, headed by La mère Monique, in search of her. Gabriel, reassured by seeing her join them, was about to descend also, when he saw a form behind him. One of the enemy, armed to the teeth, was climbing the wall. To run to this man, and push him backwards, while he cried, "Alarme! alarme!" in a loud voice, was the work of a moment. It was evidently a nocturnal surprise, and he had been right in his fears. Before a second man had time to mount, Gabriel seized the ladder, still calling loudly for assistance. Another ladder was, however, immediately raised, and the enemy were crowding up it, when Gabriel saw near him a huge stone, which he seized, and, hurling it at the ladder, broke it in two, and precipitated the unfortunate men who were on it into the moat. But Gabriel's cries had been heard, and the soldiers came flocking in. The attack of the Spaniards again failed, and Gabriel had again saved the city.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A GLORIOUS DEFEAT.

For three days after, the enemy were quiet and made no further attempt, but contented themselves with playing their batteries and working their mines incessantly, and by these means the fortifications were gradually giving way, and the ditches were being filled up. On the fourth day, they made another assault. It was the last day promised by Gabriel to the king, so if the enemy were repulsed this time, his father was saved; if not, both he and Diana were lost, and all Gabriel's former efforts useless. Thus the courage and energy that he displayed it is impossible to describe. He fought as though he was invulnerable; he was wounded in two places, but without seeming to feel it. He appeared to be everywhere, and encouraging every one by his example and words. This lasted for six hours, and at seven o'clock the Spaniards beat a retreat. St. Quentin had withstood another day. When the last of the enemy had retired, Gabriel sank exhausted into the arms of those who surrounded him. They carried him home in triumph, and as his wounds were slight, he soon recovered consciousness, and, seeing Coligny standing by him, he said—

"It has been a dreadful assault, admiral, that we have repulsed to-day."

"Yes, friend; and chiefly thanks to you."

"And the eight days that the king asked for are passed, thank God!"

"Yes; and I hear that M. de Guise has arrived with the army from Piedmont. St, Quentin, dismantled and ruined, can resist no longer; but her work is done, and France is saved. When the enemy shall have finished with us, and unhappily that cannot be long, they will find plenty behind us to oppose them."

"Oh, monsieur, you do not know the good that your words do me. But permit me to ask you—and it is not from a feeling of vainglory that I speak, but from a serious and very grave motive—do you think that my presence here has aided to preserve St. Quentin?"

"It has done everything," replied the admiral, with generous frankness; "the day of your arrival, you know that I was about to give way under my terrible responsibility, and to abandon the place to the Spaniards. The next day you brought into the city a reinforcement which, although small, sufficed to raise the spirit of our troops, and enabled us to resist. I do not allude to your excellent advice to the engineers, nor of the brilliant courage that you have displayed on every occasion; but to-day, with unexampled energy, you prolonged the defence, which, I confess, I had deemed hopeless. I tell you, Gabriel, with joy, and profound gratitude, that you have saved this city, and consequently France."

"Thanks! admiral, for your kind and generous words, but will you repeat this to his majesty?"

"It is not only my wish, but my duty to do so."

"Oh! what an obligation shall I not be under to you; for the king has in his hands a recompense more wished for by me than all the honours and dignities in the kingdom. Yes, admiral, let him grant me this, and I shall be more than repaid."

"It should, indeed, be a magnificent recompense; I only trust that the king's gratitude will not fail you. However, I will do all you wish."

"Oh!" cried Gabriel, "it is long since I have been so happy as I am at this moment. Now, we will amuse ourselves by holding the city as long as we can; it will always be so much time gained for M. de Guise."

Indeed, the enemy, as before, waited for three days, only employing themselves in destroying the walls and fortifications, and by the 26th of August they were utterly demolished, and the houses were discernible almost as distinctly as in an undefended town.

It was impossible to resist longer, and the enemy soon filled the streets of St. Quentin; but the heroic city had held out for seventeen days, twelve of which were after the arrival of Gabriel.

CHAPTER XXX.

ARNOLD DU THILL DOES A LITTLE BUSINESS.

At first, rapine and carnage filled the city, but Philibert Emanuel gave strict orders, and soon put an end to the confusion. Then sending for Coligny, he said to him,—

"I cannot punish bravery, and St. Quentin shall not be more rigorously treated than if she had surrendered at once."

He gave liberal terms. St. Quentin was of course declared a Spanish town, but those of the inhabitants who chose were permitted to leave the place. All were to be free except fifty prisoners to be chosen by himself, in order to obtain their ransoms, so as to pay the arrears due to his troops. Coligny himself he left at liberty to rejoin his uncle, M. de Montmorency, who had not on his part found such generous captors, but who—or rather France for him—had had a large ransom to pay. These conditions were gratefully accepted by Coligny, and with joy mingled with fear by the inhabitants, for they knew not on whom the choice would fall. The next day would show.

Arnold du Thill spent the night thinking over his affairs, and at last hit upon a plan. He dressed himself as richly as he could, and began to walk up and down the streets. Soon he heard a voice behind him cry, "Stop!" with a very perceptible English accent.

"What do you want?"

"I make you my prisoner," replied the man.

"Why so? Why me, more than another?"

"Because you are better dressed than most."

"Oh!" cried Arnold, "by what right do you, a simple archer, arrest me?"

"I do not do it on my own account, but for my master—Lord Grey—to whom the duke has allotted three prisoners for his share—two nobles and a bourgeois—to draw from them what ransoms he can. My master has sent me to seek them, and as you are the richest-looking bourgeois I have seen, I take you."

"It is a great honour for a poor squire, but I hope your master will feed me well."

"Why? Do you think he will have you long?"

"Until it pleases him to set me free."

"Hum," murmured the archer, "can I have mistaken a poor devil for a rich bourgeois?"

"I fear so, M. archer; and if Lord Grey has promised you a commission on the prisoners that you bring him, I assure you that you will get nothing out of me. However, you can try."

"You may be right, and I might lose the one per cent. which Lord Grey has promised me off the ransoms."

"Well, friend, if I show you a rich prey—a prisoner who would be worth 10,000 francs, for instance, should you be grateful?"

"Ten thousand francs! there are not many prisoners worth so much; that would be 100 francs for me."

"No, you must give fifty to me, if I point him out to you."

"I agree, if you do it at once.

"We shall not have far to go to find him, only a few steps forward. Now, let me hide myself behind the angle of this wall. Do you see at the balcony of that house, a gentleman talking with a bourgeois?"

"Yes; is that my man?"

"It is."

"He is called——"

"The Vicomte d'Exmès."

"Ah! the Vicomte d'Exmès. Is he as rich as he is brave?"

"That he is."

"Do you know him then?"

"Pardieu! I am his squire."

"Ah, Judas!" the archer could not help saying.

"No; for Judas hung himself, and I certainly shall not."

"Perhaps some one may save you the trouble," said the Englishman.

"Tush!" said Arnold. "Does our bargain hold good?"

"Yes; I will take your master to Lord Grey, and afterwards you shall show me a rich bourgeois, if you know one."

"Yes, I know one—at the same price—the half of your commission."

"You shall have it."

"Does your master pay ready money?"

"Yes, and in advance. You shall come with us under the pretext of accompanying your master; I shall get my money, and will give you half, afterwards you shall show me the others."

Then Arnold stepped forward to join his master, asking if he required him. While he was still speaking, the archer came up and said, bowing,—

"Is it to M. le Vicomte d'Exmès, that I have the honour of speaking?"

"I am he; but what do you want with me?"

"Your sword, monsieur."

"To you!" cried Gabriel, with a disdainful gesture.

"In the name of Lord Grey—my master. You are chosen for one of the fifty prisoners."

"Lord Grey might have come himself on this errand, I think, and it is only to him that I will give up my sword."

"As you please, monsieur."

"I suppose he will allow me ransom?"

"Certainly, monsieur."

"Then I follow you."

"But it is shameful," cried Jean Peuquoy. "You are wrong to yield thus, M. le Vicomte. You are not of St. Quentin; you do not belong to the city."

"M. Peuquoy is right," cried Arnold, making a

sign to the archer; "and who should know better—he who knows all the city; a bourgeois for the last thirty years, and a syndic of the corporation? What do you say to that, archer?"

"I have to say," replied the Englishman, who understood him, "that if this be M. Peuquoy, I have orders to take him also."

"I?"

"Yourself, monsieur."

Jean looked at Gabriel. "Alas!" he said, "I fear that the best thing we can do after fulfilling our duty as soldiers, is to accept quietly the conditions of the conqueror. Come then, knave," he continued, turning to the archer, "I am your prisoner, or your master's; and I promise him that he may keep me a long time; for he shall never see the colour of my money, and he may feed me to my latest hour."

The archer looked frightened, but seeing that Gabriel and the squire both laughed at this, he took courage again.

Lord Grey was a phlegmatic soldier, for whom war was only a commerce, and who was much out of humour at being paid only by the ransom of three prisoners. He received Gabriel and Jean Peuquoy with cold dignity.

"So it is the Vicomte d'Exmès, whom I have the honour of holding prisoner," said he. "You have given us much trouble, monsieur, and if I demanded for ransom all that you have made Philippe the Second lose, it would be the half of France."

"I have done my best," said Gabriel, simply.

"And it was much. But the chances of war have thrown you and your valiant sword into my hands. Oh! keep it, monsieur," said he, as Gabriel made a movement to give it up, but to purchase the right of using it again, what will you sacrifice? Let us arrange that; I know that unfortunately, bravery and riches do not always go together. What do you say to 5000 crowns? Is that a reasonable price?"

"No, my lord."

"No; you find that too much? Well, 4000; that is not exorbitant."

"It is not enough, my lord."

"What! Monsieur?"

"You misunderstood me, my lord. You asked me if 5000 crowns was a reasonable price, and I said no, for in my opinion, I am worth double that."

"Very good; and indeed your king may well pay that for you."

"I trust not to be compelled to have recourse to the king."

"So much the better. And when, may I ask, can you pay this?"

"You may imagine that I have not brought such a sum with me, but if you will give me time to send to Paris——"

"Very well, and until then, will it suit you to remain at Calais, of which my brother-in-law, Lord Wentworth is governor?"

"Yes," replied Gabriel, while a bitter smile passed over his pale face, "and if you will permit me, I will send my squire at once to Paris, that my captivity may be as short as possible."

"Certainly, and while awaiting his return, be assured that you will be treated with every consideration. You will have every possible liberty, and my brother-in-law will entertain you well, for he loves good living and debauchery—a little too well, perhaps. But that is his affair, and his wife—my sister—is dead."

Gabriel bowed.

"Now for you, monsieur," said Lord Grey to Jean Peuquoy; "you are, I believe, the bourgeois who has been assigned to me."

"I am Jean Peuquoy, my lord."

"Well, Jean Peuquoy, what are you worth?"

"Not ten crowns, monsieur."

"Nonsense! one hundred at least."

"Well, then, one hundred, since you value me so highly; but you do not want ready money, I hope?"

"What, have you not even this miserable sum at your disposal?"

"I had it, monsieur, but I have given it all to the poor during the siege.

"You have at least relations—friends?"

"One must not count too much upon friends; and as for relations, I have neither wife nor children; I have but a cousin who will doubtless advance me this sum, but he lives at Calais, where he has been an armourer for more than thirty years."

"Well, then, we will all go to-morrow to Calais. Till then, you are free to go where you please on your parol."

"What are your intentions?" said Gabriel to Jean, on leaving. "Is it possible that you have not one hundred crowns with which to buy your liberty at once, or do you wish to go to Calais?"

"Hush! In this Spanish atmosphere I am almost afraid to hazard a word. You can trust your squire, I think?"

"Certainly; he is the most faithful fellow in the world."

"Well, then, take him with us to Calais, instead of sending him direct to Paris. We cannot have too many eyes."

"But for what reason? Have you any relations in Calais?"

"Oh, yes; my cousin Pierre Peuquoy. He is a true Frenchman although he lives in an English town, and would willingly aid us, if by chance you ever found such an heroic project there as you have here."

"Noble friend, I understand you; but you rate me highly. You do not know how much selfishness was in my heroism, and that for the future, one sacred duty claims me before all others."

"Well, fulfil it; but perhaps when you are at Calais, you may find it also a duty to take your revenge for St. Quentin."

CHAPTER XXXI.

END OF THE HONOURARLE NEGOTIATIONS OF ARNOLD DU THILL.

Arnold remained behind, instead of following his master. The archer went to Lord Grey, and asked for his promised money, which, as he was well satisfied, was immediately given to him. He brought Arnold his share, and then said,—"Now will you help me to choose another from among the men, women, or children, of noble race in this city?"

"What! are women included?"

"Oh, yes! If you can find me one, young and pretty, that would do well. Lord Grey would sell her to his brother-in-law, Lord Wentworth, who likes female prisoners."

"Unluckily, I do not know one. Ah, yes—but it is impossible!"

"Why impossible? no one is exempt."

"No; but she of whom I speak, must not be brought near to my master; and if they were both in the governor's house at Calais——"

"But Lord Wentworth would keep her to himself you may be sure."

"Her father would pay well for her."

"What is her father—a duke?"

"A king."

"The daughter of a king here?"

"Yes; and a queen of beauty."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, tell me her name!"

"On the same conditions—half of the money."

"Oh, yes."

"Well, it is Diana de Castro, commonly called here, Sister Benie."

"Where shall I find her?"

"At the convent of the Benedictines."

"I will run there," cried the archer, disappearing.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LORD WENTWORTH.

THREE days afterwards, Lord Wentworth, governor of Calais, after having taken his instructions from Lord Grey, and seen him embark for England, remounted his horse and rode back to his house, where Gabriel, Jean Peuquoy, and Diana, were detained prisoners; the latter, however, being unaware that her lover was so near her.

Lord Wentworth was a handsome man, and, although a few gray hairs were beginning to mingle with his dark curls, still young-looking. He received his prisoners cordially.

"You are welcome to my house, M. d'Exmès," he said, "and I am much obliged to my brother-in-law for sending you here. Pardon me; but in this dull place society like yours is so rare, that I cannot but hope that your ransom will be long in coming."

"Longer than I thought, my lord; for my squire, whom I was about to send to fetch it, got into a quarrel on the way here with one of the escort, and has received a wound on his head, which will detain him in Calais longer than—I confess—I wished."

"So much the worse for him, but the better for me."

"You are too kind," said Gabriel, with a sad smile

"The greatest kindness would be, no doubt, to send you to Paris on your parol, but Lord Grey made me promise to keep you till I had the money. You are free, however, to go where you please in Calais, if you will give me your word not to attempt to escape. Even if you prefer it, I think that you will be more at your ease elsewhere than here, you are at liberty to lodge where you like."

"Oh, M. le Vicomte," cried Jean Peuquoy, "if you would deign to accept a room at my cousin's, you

would render us both proud and happy, I assure you."

"Thanks, my friend; but I fear that to use Lord Wentworth's kind permission would be to abuse it."

"No; I assure you," replied Lord Wentworth, "you are perfectly free to accept M. Peuquoy's invitation. Pierre Peuquoy is a rich fellow; I know him well, and have often bought armour from him. He has a pretty sister too, and I recommend you to go there."

Gabriel began to think, and rightly, that Lord Wentworth, for some reason, would prefer his absence, so he accepted Jean's invitation.

"I believe," continued Lord Wentworth, turning to Jean, "that it is from your cousin that your ransom is to come?"

"Yes, my lord; all that Pierre possesses belongs to Jean—it is always so between us. I was so sure of his hospitality, that I have already sent M. d'Exmès' wounded squire there; and I am so sure of his purse, that if you will send a servant with me, I promise you that he shall bring back the money."

"It is useless, M. Peuquoy. To-morrow I will come and choose instead, one of those beautiful suits of armour which your cousin makes so well. And now M. d'Exmès, I have only to add, how welcome you will be whenever you please to pay me a visit, which, perhaps, you will better appreciate, when you have experienced a little of the dulness of Calais."

When they were gone, Lord Wentworth summoned one of his servants.

"Jane," said he, "have you attended, as I ordered you, to the young lady?"

"Yes, my lord."

"How does she seem?"

"Sad, monsieur; but she is quite calm, and speaks gently, but firmly."

"Has she dined?"

"She would take nothing, my lord."

"Well, go to her, and say that Lord Wentworth, to whom Lord Grey has assigned his rights over her, begs her to receive him."

In a few minutes Jane returned, saying that the lady was ready to see him.

"Go up then, and say that I am coming." And Lord Wentworth followed with a beating heart; for though he had seen Diana bnt once, her beauty had made a deep impression on him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A JAILOR IN LOVE.

DIANA received Lord Wentworth with dignity, hiding all the inquietude which she could not but feel, under a calm exterior.

"You are Lord Weutworth, governor of Calais, I believe," she said, as he entered.

"Yes, I am Lord Wentworth, your devoted servant, and I await your commands."

"My commands! You mock me. If they had listened—not to my commands, but to my prayers—I should not be here. You know who I am, my lord?"

"I know that you are Madame de Castro, the cherished daughter of Henry the Second."

"Why, then, am I a prisoner?"

"Precisely because you are the daughter of the king, and they thought your ransom would be a large one."

"But how did they know that I was at the convent? Only the superior and one other person knew my secret."

"That person must have betrayed you."

"Oh, no! I am sure not," cried Diana, with so much warmth, that Lord Wentworth felt jealous without knowing why. "Why," continued she, "was I made prisoner in this way? Three soldiers sent to arrest a woman—all my prayers to be taken to Admiral Coligny, or even to see Lord Grey, refused—and only told that I was his prisoner, and must go to

Calais, until the payment of my ransom. Why also, was I kept from all those who might have acquainted the king with my captivity, who would have sent my ransom at once? What are Lord Grey's intentions with regard to me?"

"Madam, his only object was to draw from you the largest sum of money possible. At first I laughingly reproved my greedy brother-in-law; but I saw you—and saw that if you were a king's daughter by birth, you were a queen by beauty. Then, I confess with shame, that I changed my advice to him, and represented that in the present state of war between England and France, the possession of you was important; that you might even, perhaps, at some time, be worth a city for your ransom; and I advised him not to part with so rich a prize for a few francs."

"Oh! monsieur, how cruel! Why do you oppose my deliverance? You saw me but for a few minutes—why should you hate me?"

"Madam, I saw you but for a few minutes, and I loved you."

Diana recoiled in terror.

"Do not fear me, madam," said Lord Wentworth, "I am a gentleman, and it is I, and not you, who have reason to tremble. I love you, and could not help telling you so. Yes! when I saw you pass, looking like an angel, all my heart flew towards you. True, you are in my power here, but, alas! I am still more in yours; and of the two the true prisoner is not you—you are the queen, madam; order, and I will obey."

"Then, monseigneur, send me to Paris, from whence I will immediately forward whatever ransom you may fix."

"Anything but that, madam; such a sacrifice is beyond my strength when I tell you that a glance from you has chained my heart for ever. Here, in this exile, I have never had before a worthy object of love; I have loved you but for two hours, it is true, but if you knew me you would know that it is as if I had loved you all my life."

"But, mon Dieu! my lord, what do you hope or expect?"

"To see you, madam—to enjoy your presence. My blessed right is to keep you here, and I will use it."

"And you believe, my lord, that this violence will win my love?"

"No, madam, but perhaps seeing me each day so sad—so respectful—you will be touched at last."

"And then——"

"Then, madam, Lord Wentworth, the head of one of the richest and most noble families in England, will lay at the feet of Madame de Castro his name and his life."

"Is he ambitious?" thought Diana; and then said, "Listen, my lord; give me my freedom, I counsel you, and you shall be satisfied. When peace comes, as come it must, I will obtain for you, besides my ransom, more honours and dignities than you would ever have as my husband. Be generous, and I will be grateful."

"Madam, I divine your thoughts, but I am at once more disinterested and more ambitious than you think. Of all the treasures in the world I wish but for you."

"Then, my lord," said Diana, blushing, but proud, "one last word—I love another."

"And do you imagine that I will resign you quietly to a rival? No, he shall be as unhappy as myself, more so, for he will not see you. Three events only can henceforth free you. My death, but I am young; peace, but I trust that that is far off; or the taking of Calais; but Calais is impregnable. You are wholly mine, for I have bought of Lord Grey his rights over you, and you will see what a sure and devoted jailor is a man who loves." So saying, Lord Wentworth bowed and went away, leaving Diana trembling and despairing.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHERE VARIOUS SUBJECTS ARE COLLECTED WITH MUCH SKILL.

THREE weeks had passed, and no important change had taken place in the fortunes of the different personages of our history. Jean Peuquoy had, of course, paid his ransom, and had obtained permission to set up in business at Calais. He did not, however, seem in a hurry to begin, but passed his days in wandering about the ramparts and talking to the soldiers.

Gabriel became daily more sad. He had heard only general news from Paris. France was beginning to recover, and the Spaniards were checked. These events, to the accomplishment of which he had so largely contributed, rejoiced him certainly, but the thought of his father and of Diana clouded his brow, and prevented him from meeting, as he would have done at any other time, the friendly advances of the governor, who seemed to have taken a violent fancy to him. He made him dine with him three times a week, and came to see him on the alternate days. It was a troublesome affection, for he often declared that he would keep him as long as he could, and not let him go until he had received the last farthing of his ransom. As, after all, this might only be a gentlemanly way of expressing distrust, Gabriel did not dare to remonstrate, and he waited impatiently for the recovery of his squire, but he seemed to get on slowly, notwithstanding that after two or three days the surgeon had declared his task ended, and that a few days' care was all that was necessary. Gabriel at length decided that his squire should set off in two days, but when this time arrived, Arnold declared himself to be so giddy and weak as to be unable to stand without support. Gabriel, therefore, granted him two more days, but

then Babette Peuquoy, who had been nursing Arnold, declared to Gabriel, with tears in her eyes, that she was sure, that if he forced his squire to go he would die from weakness on the road. This went on for some time, but at last Gabriel grew angry and impatient, and Arnold himself declared that he was ready to start, and said to Babette that he had better go at once that he might return the sooner; but poor Babette's red eyes and sorrowful looks showed that she was not well pleased.

The night before Arnold was to leave, Gabriel went as usual to dine with Lord Wentworth. As he was leaving, a woman approached him, and, with her finger on her lips, pushed a paper into his hand. Gabriel, much surprised, and seeing no one near, stepped back into the hall, and by the light of the lamp read, with some emotion, the following words,—

"MONSIEUR,—I do not know you; I have never seen you, but one of my women tells me that you are French, and a prisoner like myself, and this gives me courage to cry to you in my distress. You are, doubtless, received to ransom, and will return to Paris; you may see my friends, who are ignorant of what has become of me. You can tell them where I am, that Lord Wentworth keeps me here, and allows me to communicate with no one—will accept of no ransom—and, abusing his position, speaks to me of a love which fills me with horror, but which seems to increase, and may drive him to any extremity. A gentleman and a countryman will certainly help me in this miserable position. Now I will tell you who I am——" but here the letter broke off abruptly, doubtless from the writer having been interrupted and having thought it better to send it as it was than not at all.

Gabriel, much moved, was still standing there, when Lord Wentworth himself suddenly appeared.

"You here again, Gabriel," said he, "what has brought you back? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

Gabriel's only answer was to hand to him the letter that he had just received.

Lord Wentworth glanced at it, and grew deadly pale, but as he read, he concocted his answer.

"The old fool," said he.

Nothing could be better calculated to disarm Gabriel's suspicions and abate his interest; however, he said, "But who is this prisoner whom you keep here against her will, my lord?"

"Against her will! I should think so. She is a relation of my wife's—quite mad, and whom they have most inconveniently for me intrusted to my charge. As you have penetrated this family secret you may as well know all about it. The mania of Lady Howe, whose head is turned by novels and romances, is to think herself an oppressed heroine, in spite of her fifty years and her gray hairs, and to wish to interest in her cause every young man that she hears of."

"It is a strange story," answered Gabriel, somewhat coldly; "why does she call herself French?"

"Oh! to interest you, I suppose," said Lord Wentworth, with a forced smile.

"But this love, with which she says that you persecute her——"

"Illusions of madness, I suppose," answered Lord Wentworth, impatiently.

"You keep her very closely concealed, my lord."

"I did not know that you were so curious, Gabriel; but it is a quarter to nine, and I advise you to go home before the curfew sounds. If Lady Howe interests you so much, you can hear more of her to-morrow."

Gabriel returned home, but he could not quite shake off the doubts which were awakened by the letter. He resolved, however, to say no more on the subject to Lord Wentworth, but to watch and find out more about it himself. The next morning Arnold set out, not without many injunctions from Gabriel to procure the money for his ransom, and return as quickly as possible. It was difficult to say whether Gabriel or Babette wished most anxiously for his return, but they were both destined to wait for a long time.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW ARNOLD DU THILL HANGS ARNOLD DU THILL AT NOYON.

Arnold met several bodies of men on his way, and was frequently stopped, but his safe conduct from Lord Wentworth always sufficed to enable him to proceed unmolested. Still these interruptions delayed and annoyed him so much, that, on the second day, he determined to avoid the towns, and only to rest in the smallest hamlets. But to do this he was obliged to leave the high road, and as he was journeying onwards he saw a man, who, on his approach, disappeared into a ditch.

Arnold at first passed him rapidly, fearing he was a robber, but seeing that he did not stir, he became curious and returned to the ditch. The man then suddenly darted up, and seizing him by one leg, threw him off his horse, and placing his knee on his breast, asked him who he was.

"Let me go, I beg. I am French, but I have a pass from Lord Wentworth, the governor of Calais."

"If you are French—and in truth you have not the accent of those demons—I do not want even to see your pass. But what made you approach me with so much curiosity?"

"I saw you in the ditch, and advanced to see if you were in want of assistance."

"Thanks for your good intentions," said the other, "I have behaved rather roughly to you, it is true; but my affairs are in a bad state at present, and that is my excuse. But you are a countryman and will help me—I am called Martin Guerre—what is your name?"

"I—I am called Bertrand," cried Arnold, trembling to find himself alone with this man whom he had injured so much. Fortunately for him, the darkness

of the night insured his incognito, and he disguised his voice.

"Well then, Bertrand," continued Martin, "know that I have been a prisoner among the Spaniards and Flemings, from whom I have escaped to-day, for the second time. I have been for the last month their butt—exposed to all sorts of insults, and to continued reproaches which they cast in my teeth about some girl whom they called Gudule, and whom they declared I had carried off. One fine day, however, I ran off, but they retook me and gave me a good beating, and threatened to hang me if I did it again. But in spite of their threats I again escaped at Noyon, and climbed into a tree, to wait for night. They have sought me, I know, for they passed under the very tree in which I was concealed. When it was getting dark I came down, and then I lost myself in the wood, and I am now dying from hunger, for I have not tasted food for twenty-four hours."

"You did not appear very weak just now," replied Arnold.

"You will assist me to find my way—will you not?"

Arnold reflected a moment; for he did not desire, either to be recognised by Martin, or that he should arrive at Paris at the same time as himself, and so discover his treachery. Then he said—"I will show you the road; I am returning myself from Amray, which is the next village on the road to Paris, and if you will come with me for a few leagues, I will show you a more direct road than this to Amray, and then you cannot mistake your way."

"Thanks; but cannot you also give me something to eat, for I am faint with hunger?"

"Alas! I have not a crumb; but if you would like to drink, I have a bottle full."

"Oh, yes; a little wine will give me strength."

"Well then, drink, my good man," said Arnold, handing him his bottle.

Martin took a good draught; and with his empty stomach, he felt almost immediately the exhilarating effect. "Ah!" said he, "your claret is strong."

"Not at all; it is very mild. I can drink two bottles of it with ease. But let us sit down for a few minutes, and rest, and then I will show you the way. Where were you made prisoner?"

"The enemy declare that it was at the battle of St. Laurent; but I believe that it was later, and that I was alone when I fell into their hands."

"How extraordinary! Take another draught, and then tell me more about yourself—it must be interesting. Are you from Picardy?"

"No," replied Martin, after another pull at the bottle, "I am from Artignes."

"A fine country. Have you a family there?"

"Yes, a wife and children." And Martin, led on by Arnold, and excited by the wine, recounted all his history—his youth—his courtship, and how his wife was charming, but had one little defect—that of being too ready to use her hands, and "although" as he said, "a blow from a woman does not dishonour a man, it becomes tiresome at least."

After talking thus for some time, Martin, who had made a third attack upon the bottle, tried to rise, but found that he staggered, and fell back again. "Oh!" he cried, with a loud laugh, "what is the matter? it surely cannot be that wine. Help me up, comrade," and he began to sing loudly.

"Hush!" said Arnold, "you will bring the enemy upon us."

"Devil take the enemy—I defy them now!"

"But do you not wish to sleep at Amray? Stay—I will lead my horse by the bridle, and give you my other arm, and conduct you myself to Amray, or else I am sure that you would not find the way."

"Ma foi, I accept your offer, and thank you; for, between ourselves, I fear that I am a little drunk."

Arnold, then taking him by the arm, led him to the postern-gate of Noyon. "Now," said he, "you need go no further. Knock at the door, and mention my name to the man who opens, and he will show you my brother's house. He will receive you, and give you a bed, if you say that I sent you."

"Adieu, and thanks," replied Martin. "I am only a poor devil, who cannot repay you as you deserve, but God will, I am sure."

For a moment this prediction frightened Arnold, who felt half inclined to recall his victim; but he was already knocking vigorously at the door.

"Who is there?" asked the sentinel.

"Arnold du Thill—Martin Guerre, I mean."

"Arnold du Thill! Here, comrades," cried the sentinel, and the real Arnold, hidden behind a tree, heard several voices exclaim, "Is it really he?"

Poor Martin Guerre, on recognising his persecutors, uttered a cry of despair, which struck the heart even of Arnold. Then was heard a scuffle, mingled with oaths, but the noise gradually diminished, when Arnold laid down to sleep under a tree.

He awoke about four o clock in the morning, and was cautiously taking his way back to the road where he had met Martin the evening before, when he saw, just outside the town, a gibbet, on which was a man hanging, whom he recognised as poor Martin. With a hideous smile he advanced, and cut the cord with his sabre, and, after taking a ring off the finger of the dead man, he searched his pockets, where he found various letters and papers, which he appropriated.

Half-an-hour afterwards a wood-cutter who was passing along, saw the cord dangling from the gibbet, and the body on the ground, and approached towards it. As he did so, the body moved its head and then its hands, and finally raised itself on its knees, when the man fled in terror.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE DREAMS OF ARNOLD DU THILL.

THE Constable de Montmorency—arrived only the day before—presented himself at the Louvre. But Henry the Second received him coldly, and began

to praise the measures which had been adopted by the Duc de Guise, and which he said had been the means of saving the kingdom. Pale with anger, the constable flew for consolation to Diana de Poitiers, but here also he found that absence and failure had diminished his popularity, and he met with a frigid reception, Returning to his house, he stamped with rage, exclaiming, "Kings and women are an ungrateful race, and love only success."

"Monseigneur," said a valet, "here is a man who wishes to speak to you."

"Let him go to the devil."

"He desired me to say, monsieur, that he was called Arnold du Thill."

"Arnold! Oh, you may admit him. I thought you were a prisoner," said Montmorency, as he entered.

"I was so, monseigneur, like yourself."

"How did you escape?"

"I made use of *my* money—cunning. But as that is all the money I have, I am lamentably in want of some."

"What! asking already?"

"It is a debt, as monseigneur will see, if he will deign to look over this paper."

The constable read it, and said, "Some of these things are absurd, and others might have been useful to me in the position in which I formerly stood, but are certainly not so now."

"Monseigneur exaggerates his disgrace."

"Disgrace! Well, since you always know everything, you know, I suppose, that the king will not now give his daughter to my son?"

"I think that the king would willingly do so if you would restore her to him."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you not heard that she has been missing ever since the taking of St. Quentin?"

"No, I have not; I only arrived last night."

"Well, monseigneur, do you not think that you would regain the favour of the king, if you went to

him and said, 'Sire, you weep for your daughter; you seek her everywhere. I alone know where she is.'"

"Do you know, Arnold?"

"To know is my trade. I have news to sell, and you see that it are worth buying. Reflect, monsieur."

"I do reflect, and I know that kings remember the defects of those who serve them, and not their successes. I should restore his daughter to the king—at first he would be delighted, and all the gold and all the honours in the world would not suffice to pay me. But then Diana would weep, and declare that she would die if they gave her to any one but the Vicomte d'Exmès, and the king would yield, and remember only the battle I have lost, and not the child I have restored. Thus all my efforts would only tend to render the Vicomte d'Exmès happy."

"Then at the same time that Madame de Castro re-appears, M. d'Exmès must disappear."

"Yes, but I do not like such extreme measures."

"Ah, monseigneur mistakes my intentions. I never thought of violence. Come, I will show you the lost lady, and will ensure the absence of your rival during a sufficient time to get the marriage over with your son. On your part, what will you do for me?"

"What do you want?"

"First, the payment of the account which I have had the honour to present to you."

"So be it."

"Ah! I thought we should have no difficulty there. But money is not all."

"What do you say?"

"Monsieur, I am no longer the Arnold du Thill whom you have known, restless and covetous, but intend now to pass the rest of my days peaceably in my native place, with a modest fortune, in the bosom of my family."

"Your family—I never knew you had one."

"Oh, monsieur, Arnold du Thill is not my real name; I am actually Martin Guerre, and was born in

the village of Artignes, near Mieux, where I have left my wife and children."

"Your wife and children!" cried Montmorency, astonished.

"Yes, monseigneur; and I must tell you that these two services will be my last, and that thenceforward I shall retire from business and live quietly, surrounded by the esteem of my friends and the affection of my family."

"Marvellous! But if you have become so domestic, what price do you ask for your secret?"

"Why, monsieur, I have prepared a paper, attesting that I, Martin Guerre, have been in your service for so many years, and have always proved myself a faithful squire; in consideration of which you have presented me with a sum of money sufficient to render me comfortable for the rest of my days; and to this I wish you to append your name and seal."

"Impossible; I should deserve to be called a villain, if I signed such falsehoods."

"No, monsieur, they are not falsehoods. I have served you faithfully. Besides, it is only a mutual exchange of benefits, and you may be sure that no one will ever appear to give you the lie. Sign, monsieur."

"No; I must first know where Madame de Castro and M. d'Exmès are."

"I will tell you, monsieur, and I think that you will allow that chance and I have both worked for you. Madame de Castro was simply taken captive at St. Quentin as one of the fifty prisoners; but why those who hold her keep her secret, and why she has not communicated with her friends, I know not. Possibly her messengers, owing to these troubled times, have been taken, or perhaps some other mystery is behind; but I can positively say where she is, and in whose hands."

"That is valuable news, certainly; and where is she?"

"Wait, monsieur! first hear something of the Vicomte d'Exmès."

"Well, where is he?"

"A prisoner also; it is fashionable just now."

"But he will soon be free; he will send for his ransom, and we may have him here any day."

"Exactly so, monsieur; he has sent for his ransom."

"Well, then, what can we do?"

"Luckily, monsieur, it is I, who have been serving him under my true name of Martin Guerre, whom he has sent for the money."

"You have not been for the money, then?"

"Certainly I have, monsieur; one does not neglect such things. But be easy—he shall not have it. It is just these 10,000 crowns, which will enable me to live comfortably for the rest of my life, and for which, according to this paper, I shall be supposed to be indebted to your generosity."

"But I will not sign it," cried Montmorency; "I will not be the accomplice of a thief."

"Well, then, send him this money, and he will return as soon as Madame de Castro."

"And if we do not send it?"

"We shall gain time. He will most probably wait for me a fortnight quietly, then another week impatiently, and another in despair. Perhaps he may then send a second messenger to seek the first, the first will not be found, and it will doubtless take some time to collect another 10,000 crowns. You will have time to marry your son twice over, for the vicomte will not re-appear for two months at least. He will only return next year, furious and disappointed."

"Yes, but when he does return, will he not seek for his squire?"

"Alas! monsieur, I regret to tell you that poor Martin, in returning to his master, with the ransom in his possession, unfortunately fell into the hands of the Spaniards, who, after robbing him, hung him at Noyon."

"How! Arnold? You will certainly be hung."

"I have been so already, monsieur: see how far my zeal goes. Perhaps the dates may not quite agree, but

who can trust the word of those wretched Spaniards? You see, monsieur, that my precautions have been well taken, and that you can never be compromised. Shall I give you a receipt, monsieur?" continued he, impudently; and he placed the paper before the constable.

"But, first the name of the town, and of the man who holds Diana prisoner."

"Name for name, monsieur: sign this first."

Montmorency did so.

"Your seal, monsieur?"

"Here it is; now, where is Diana?"

"In the hands of Lord Wentworth, at Calais."

"And the Vicomte d'Exmès?"

"In the same place."

"But then they see each other?"

"No, monsieur; he knows not that his lady love is so near him. He lives in the town, and she in the governor's house."

"I will go to the Louvre," cried the constable.

"And I, to Artignes," said Arnold.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE FEARS OF BABETTE PEUQUOY.

To the great regret of Diana and the Vicomte d'Exmès, nearly a month passed without bringing any change in their situation. Pierre Peuquoy made armour, Jean had recommenced weaving, and Babette wept. As for Gabriel, he had done as Arnold had predicted, and had waited patiently for the first fortnight, and impatiently for the next. He went but rarely now to Lord Wentworth's, who had been cool to him, ever since he had so rashly entered into his private affairs.

Lord Wentworth himself became daily more sad. It was not, however, the three messages sent by the king at short intervals which disquieted him. All

three—the first with politeness—the second with bitterness—and the third with menaces, demanded of course the same thing—the liberty of Madame de Castro on the payment of a ransom, the amount of which was left to Lord Wentworth. To all these he had given the same reply, that he would keep Madame de Castro as a hostage, to exchange her, perhaps, at some future time, for some important prisoner, or else keep her until peace was concluded.

He was only doing what he had a strict right to do, and he defied Henry the Second behind the thick walls of Calais. It was not then the anger of the king that troubled him, although he was much puzzled to find out how he had heard that he held her captive. What troubled him was the continued contempt and dislike of Diana herself. Neither submission nor attentions had been able to soften her proud and disdainful spirit. She always remained sad, calm, and dignified before the passionate governor, and if he spoke a word of love—always, we must say, remaining faithful to his character of a gentleman—a look, at once wretched and haughty, pierced his heart and offended his pride.

He had not dared to speak to her of the letter she had written to Gabriel, nor of the messages from the king, so much did he fear a bitter word or a reproach from that charming mouth. But Diana, seeing no longer the waiting maid who had assisted her, understood that this last chance had failed her. On the last day of October Gabriel determined to go to Lord Wentworth, and ask him for another messenger to send to Paris for his ransom.

Lord Wentworth was engaged when he called, and begged that Gabriel would wait for a few minutes. While he waited he approached the window of the room to look out, when some writing with a diamond on the glass attracted his attention. Looking more closely at it, he distinctly read, "Diana de Castro." A cloud passed over his eyes, and he was obliged to lean against the wall for support. Was this, then, the signature that was wanting to the letter? Was it

Diana, his own Diana, whom Lord Wentworth held in his power, and dared to persecute with his love? As these thoughts passed through his mind, Lord Wentworth entered. Gabriel, without saying a word, pointed to the writing on the window.

Lord Wentworth turned very pale—then recovering himself, said quietly, "Well, and what then?"

"Is not that the name of the mad relation whom you keep here?"

"It is possible," answered Lord Wentworth, haughtily.

"If so, sir, I know this lady, and am devoted to her, as every French gentleman should be to a daughter of the house of France."

"Well, monsieur?"

"I shall demand the reason why you detain a lady of such high rank."

"And if I refuse to answer you, monsieur, as I have already refused the king of France?"

"The king of France!"

"Yes, monsieur; an Englishman is not, it seems to me, accountable to the king of another country for his actions, especially when there is war between the two countries. Thus M. d'Exmès, if I also refuse to answer you——"

"I should demand satisfaction, my lord."

"And you hope to kill me, doubtless, with that sword which you only wear, thanks to my kindness, and which I may demand at any time."

"Oh! my lord," cried Gabriel, furiously, "you shall pay for this."

"It is annoying to you, no doubt, to have your hands tied, but confess that it would not do for a prisoner of war, and a debtor, to regain his liberty, and pay his debts, by cutting his creditor's throat."

"My lord," said Gabriel, trying to speak calmly, "you are aware that I sent my squire to Paris, a month ago, for my ransom. Something must have happened to him—he has, perhaps, been robbed and murdered on the road. At all events he has not returned, and I came to-day to ask leave to send some

one else to procure my ransom. Now, my lord, you cannot refuse me this permission, or else I shall say that you fear my being at liberty—that you fear my sword."

"And to whom will you say that, in an English town, under my immediate authority?"

"To every man who speaks or thinks—to every officer—to every workman——"

"You seem to forget, monsieur, that I have but to say the word, and you would be thrown into prison, where you could accuse me only to the walls."

"Oh! it is true!" cried Gabriel in anguish. "Dear Diana, I can do nothing for you in your need."

"What did you say! sir?" cried Lord Wentworth, "did I hear right—do you also love Madame de Castro?"

"Yes, I love her, and my love is as pure and devoted, as yours is unworthy and cruel. Yes! I love her—I idolize her."

"Ah! you love her, and she loves you, no doubt. It is you whose remembrance she invokes when she wishes to torture me. It is for you that she despises and rejects me."

"Oh! does she really love me thus?" cried Gabriel, "and thinks of me—calls for me. Oh, my lord, in spite of you and all the world, I will save and protect her. Do what you please with me, for with her love as a shield, I am sure to conquer you."

"It is true—I believe it," murmured Lord Wentworth. Then, after a pause, he said, "You came to ask for a second messenger to Paris?"

"Such was the object of my visit, my lord."

"And you reproach me, doubtless, that I have not had sufficient faith in your word as a gentleman to allow you to go to Paris yourself for your ransom?"

"It is true, my lord."

"Well, monsieur, from this day you are free—the gates of Calais are open to you."

"I understand you, monsieur—you wish to send me away from her. But suppose I now refuse to go?"

"I am master here, monsieur, and you have no choice as to accepting or refusing."

"Then I will go, my lord, but I cannot now feel grateful for the permission."

"I have no need of your gratitude, monsieur," said Lord Wentworth, coldly.

"I will go, my lord, but I will not long remain your debtor; I shall soon return my lord with my ransom, and as I shall then be neither your prisoner nor your debtor, you can no longer refuse to fight me."

"I ought to refuse it, monsieur," said Lord Wentworth with melancholy, "for our situations are unequal. If I kill you, she will hate me; but if you kill me, she will only love you the more. But I accept your challenge, nevertheless. It is now three o'clock, and you have until seven, when they close the gates, to get ready for your departure: I will give orders that you shall be allowed to depart."

"Very well, my lord, at seven o'clock I shall be no longer in Calais."

"And you shall never re-enter it; even if I am killed by you in a duel outside the walls, my precautions will have been taken to ensure your never seeing her again, which will be effectual if the words of a governor and a dying man have any weight."

"It is impossible, my lord! I must see her again."

"How will you manage it?"

After an instant's thought, Gabriel replied, "I will take Calais, my lord." Then bowing, he went out, leaving Lord Wentworth petrified with astonishment, and hardly knowing whether to laugh or not at the threat.

Gabriel returned to Jean Peuquoy, and told him all that had passed. When he came out of his room an hour afterwards, having finished his packing, he found Babette outside the door.

"You are sure that you will return, monsieur?" said she.

"I swear it."

"With your squire, Martin Guerre, I suppose?"

"I trust so."

"You are sure to find him at Paris. He is not a bad man, and would not think of making away with your ransom. He is incapable of such treachery, is he not?"

"I will answer for him, although he has been much changed of late."

"And he is also incapable of deceiving a woman?"

"Oh, that I would not answer for so certainly."

"Well, monsieur," said poor Babette, turning pale; "will you give him this ring; he will know what it means, and from whom it comes."

"I will give it to him, Babette," said Gabriel, surprised, "but the person who sends it knows, I suppose, that he is a married man."

"Married! Oh then, monsieur, do not give it to him—break it—throw it away."

"But, Babette——"

"Adieu, monsieur," cried the poor girl, who rushed into her own room, where she sank fainting on a chair.

Gabriel, unquiet and distressed, went down-stairs, where he found Jean waiting for him.

"M. le Vicomte," said he, "you once asked me why I wove such long cords, and I wish now to tell you. By joining two of such long cords, I can make an immense ladder, which Pierre and I, who belong to the City Guard, could transport piece by piece to the Octagon tower. Then some dark morning in December or January, when I am sentinel, I could fasten it to the iron spikes on the battlement, and let the other end fall into the sea, where some bold boat's crew might chance to find it."

"But, my brave Jean——"

"Enough for the present, M. d'Exmès; but I wish before you go, to give you a souvenir. It is a plan of the walls and fortifications of Calais, which I have made from observations taken during those long walks round them, which you used to laugh at so much. Adieu, M. d'Exmès."

At the door Pierre was standing. "Thanks for your hospitality, monsieur," said Gabriel to him; "I will send or bring the money that you have advanced

to me. Meanwhile, pray present this diamond ring to your sister."

"I accept it, M. le Vicomte, on condition that you will accept something from me. This horn, which I have made myself, and whose tone I should recognise through the roaring of the sea; for instance, on the 5th of each month when I mount guard from four to six o'clock on the Octagon tower, which overhangs the sea."

"Thanks!" said Gabriel, pressing his hand to show him that he was understood.

"I have plenty of arms," continued Pierre, "so that in case of an assault, the French party in the city could all be armed, and would be very formidable."

"That is true," said Gabriel, again pressing the hand of the brave citizen.

"Adieu, monsieur; or rather, au revoir."

"Soon, I hope," answered Gabriel, as he mounted his horse.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE END OF THE TRIBULATIONS OF MARTIN GUERRE.

GABRIEL'S journey to Paris took him four days, for the roads were bad, and he had to make many détours to avoid falling in with the enemy. His thoughts were incessantly occupied with the captivity of his father and Diana, and by the promise of the king, and the part that he should take if Henri did not fulfil it; "though surely," he thought, "the first gentleman in Europe cannot break his word."

When he arrived at his own house, whence he had been so long absent, it was very early in the morning, but he found Aloyse already stirring, and was soon in the arms of his faithful nurse.

"Ah! here you are at last, monsieur!—here you are my child," cried she.

"Is there any news from the court, Aloyse?"

"None, monsieur."

"Oh! of course," cried the young man bitterly; "I was a prisoner—perhaps dead; one does not pay one's debts to a prisoner, still less to a dead man. But when they see me alive and free, they must keep their word."

"I trust so, monsieur."

"Is Admiral Coligny in Paris?"

"Yes, he has sent a dozen times to ask if you had returned. As for Madame de Castro, who was lost so long, M. de Montmorency has discovered that she is a prisoner at Calais, and hopes soon to be able to obtain her release."

"I know it, and hope it also. But you do not speak to me of Martin Guerre, who has so prolonged my captivity, by not returning to me. What has become of him?"

"He is here, monsieur, the sluggard."

"What! here? Since when—what is he doing?"

"He is in bed; he says that he has been hung, and is ill."

"Hung! to rob him of my money, probably."

"Yes, your ransom. Go and speak to this idiot about it, and hear what he will say. He came here suddenly, and I gave him 10,000 crowns as he requested. Some days afterwards he returned, looking miserable. He denied having received anything from me, and pretends that he has been a prisoner himself for three months, and did not know what had become of you. He says that you charged him with a mission, and that he was taken prisoner, beaten, and afterwards hung, and that he has only now escaped."

"I do not understand, Aloyse. I feel sure that Martin is too honest and too devoted to me, to have stolen this money."

"Yes, monsieur, but I fear he is mad—raving mad. I gave him the money, I will take my oath; Elyot had some trouble to collect it so quickly."

"He must, however, find me as much more. But never mind that now, I must go to the Louvre."

"What, monsieur! without any rest. Besides it is only seven o'clock, and you will not be admitted

until nine, and the king does not receive until twelve."

"Still some hours of suspense," cried Gabriel.

At this moment, Martin Guerre, who had heard his master's voice, rushed in, pale with joy and from the effects of his ill-treatment.

"It is you, monsieur," cried he; "what happiness!"

But Gabriel received coldly the transports of his poor squire. "If I am free, Martin, confess that no thanks are due to you, since you did your best to leave me a prisoner for ever."

"What! do you accuse me, also?" cried Martin, in consternation. "You, whom I hoped would have answered for me at once."

"Do you deny that I sent you for my ransom?"

"Oh, yes, I do, monsieur. Do you believe me capable of robbing you?"

"No, Martin, I was just saying so to Aloyse. But you may have been robbed or have lost it in coming to rejoin me."

"To rejoin you! monsieur. I swear to you, that from the day we left St. Quentin, I have not known what became of you. Where could I go to join you?"

"To Calais, Martin; it is impossible that you can forget Calais."

"I never saw Calais in my life, monsieur."

"And Babette?"

"What Babette?"

"Her whom you have ruined."

"Oh, you mean Gudule, monsieur—you mistake the name."

"What! another still. Her, however, I do not know; but I do know Babette Peuquoy."

"Well, monsieur, they all say here that I am mad, and I believe that I shall become so at last; but at present my memory is good, and if you will allow me, I will tell you what has really happened to me during the last three months."

"I shall be curious to hear your account."

Martin then related what the reader is already

aware of, and added that when he returned to consciousness, after having been hung, he found himself lying at the foot of the gallows with the rope still round his neck, which had been cut. "Doubtless by a thief," said he, "for my wedding ring and all my papers were gone. However, be that as it may, I had been cut down in time, and in spite of my rather dislocated neck, I fled a third time—hiding by day, and travelling by night—living on roots and wild herbs, until at last I arrived here."

"Well, Martin, now I will tell you an entirely different story, of which I can testify to the truth."

"The history of my Number 2, monsieur; really I shall be glad to hear it."

At this moment they were interrupted by the entrance of Aloyse, followed by a man dressed as a peasant.

"What does this mean now?" asked she. "Here is a man who has come to announce your death, Martin Guerre."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHEN THE INNOCENCE OF MARTIN GUERRE BEGINS TO APPEAR.

"My death!" cried Martin.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the peasant, on seeing him, "how, in the name of heaven, monsieur, is it that you are here before me? I swear to you that I have made all possible haste to execute your commission, and gain your ten crowns; and unless you travelled on horseback, you could not have passed me."

"But I never saw you, and you speak as if you knew me."

"You never saw me! when it was yourself who desired me to come here to announce the death of Martin Guerre, who was hung."

"But I am Martin Guerre."

"You! impossible! you could not tell me of your own death."

"But when and where did I tell you all this?"

"Must I then tell all now?"

"Yes."

"In spite of the tale that you told me to tell?"

"Yes."

"Well, as your memory is so short, and you force me to do it, I will tell all, and no one will be to blame but yourself. Six days ago, early in the morning, I was weeding my field——"

"In the first place—where is your field?"

"Must I tell the truth?"

"Certainly."

"Then my field is near Montargis. I saw you passing, when you said, 'What are you doing, friend?' 'Weeding, monsieur,' I replied. 'What do you earn a day?' you then asked. 'One day with another, four sous.' 'Would you like to gain twenty crowns in a fortnight?' 'Oh, yes!' I answered.

"'Well then,' you replied, 'go to Paris as fast as possible, and ask for the house of the Vicomte d'Exmès, in the Rue St. Paul. He will not be there, but ask for his old nurse, Aloyse, and say to her, I come from Noyon—mind, from Noyon, and not Montargis—where an acquaintance of yours, Martin Guerre, has recently been hung, after having been robbed of all the money that he carried; but before they hung him, he had time to tell me to come here, and acquaint you with his misfortune, and that you were to provide anew a ransom for his master, and were to give me ten crowns for my trouble;' and you gave me ten crowns in advance."

"I was quite willing to go," continued the peasant; "but I said, 'If Madame Aloyse asks me any questions about this Martin Guerre, whom I have never seen?' And you replied, 'Look at me well, and describe him as exactly like me.'"

"How strange!" cried Gabriel.

"I have come," added the man, "to repeat the

lesson that you taught me, and I find you here before me, and yet I have been only six days on the road."

"The man lies," said Aloyse; "for he says that he saw Martin six days ago, and he has been in his bed longer than that."

"It must be my Number 2," said Martin.

"Nonsense!" cried Aloyse.

"Not so," said Gabriel; "I believe that this man reveals the truth to us."

"I swear that I speak the truth, monsieur, and I hope you will give me my ten crowns."

"Yes; but you must leave your name and address with me. Some day we may want your testimony. My suspicions are fully aroused; but enough. Now, my man, here is your money—you may go. And now, Aloyse," said he, turning to his nurse, "I will leave you; for I wish to see M. de Guise and the admiral before I go to the king."

"And when you have seen the king, you will return immediately, monsieur?"

"Yes, Aloyse, you may be easy on my account; and you, Martin, remain here, for I must be alone. I will not neglect your justification, but I have another duty to perform first."

As Gabriel was walking along the Place de Grève, he saw before him a man wrapped in a large cloak, and wearing a slouched hat, that almost hid his face. Gabriel was passing him, when he said, softly, "Gabriel."

"M. de Coligny—here so early!"

"Hush! I do not wish to be recognised and followed at present; but seeing you, my friend, after so long a separation, and so much uneasiness on your account, I could not refrain from addressing you. How long have you been in Paris?"

"I only arrived this morning, and I was going to call upon you at the Louvre, before asking for an audience of the king."

"Then if you will come a little way with me, you shall tell me what has become of you all this time."

"I will tell you all, but first permit me to ask you one question?"

"You are going to ask me if I have kept the promise that I made to you. If I have recounted to the king your glorious defence of St. Quentin."

"No, admiral, that is really not what I was about to ask, for I trusted implicitly to your word. I was sure that your first care on arriving here would be to fulfil your engagement, and generously announce to the king, the share that I had taken in defending St. Quentin, which I have no doubt you even exaggerated. What I wish to know is, what Henri said in reply?"

"Alas! Gabriel, he only replied by asking what had become of you. It was an embarrassing question, for I really did not know; but I replied that I feared you had been taken prisoner."

"And then?"

"The king said, 'It is well,' and smiled. Then, when I recommenced speaking of your services,—'Enough on that subject,' cried he, imperiously, and immediately introduced another topic. But, courage, friend; you know I warned you long ago not to put too much faith in the gratitude of the great of this world."

"Yes, the king has gladly forgotten my rights when he thought me dead or in captivity; but I will make him remember."

"But if he persists in his forgetfulness!"

"Monsieur, when kings do one an injury, one can only appeal to God, who may permit one to be the instrument of his vengeance."

"Do you remember," said Coligny, "a conversation that we once had together about the oppressed Protestants. in which I suggested a sure way of punishing kings without infringing the law?"

"I remember it perfectly, and may some day be glad to use your method."

"That being the case, can you spare me an hour?"

"The king does not receive until noon; up to that time I am at your service."

"Come with me, then. You are a gentleman, and I ask no oath, but a simple promise to keep inviolably secret the names of the persons whom you are about to see, and the things that you are about to hear."

"I promise."

"Follow me, then, and if you meet with injustice at the Louvre, you will know where to turn for revenge."

CHAPTER XL.

A PHILOSOPHER AND A SOLDIER.

Coligny stopped before a poor-looking house in the Rue St. Jacques, and knocked, when the outer door was opened, and then, on the porter recognising Coligny, an inner one. They mounted a great many steps until they came to the attics, and then entered a large but poor-looking room, of which the only furniture was an oaken table and four stools. As Coligny entered two men advanced to meet him.

"Theodore and you, captain," said he, "I bring you a friend, if not of the past or the present, I trust in the future."

They bowed, and then Gabriel drew a little on one side to enable them to converse freely. Presently Coligny came up to him and said,—

"I ask your pardon, but I was obliged to consult my companions before letting you know where and with whom you are."

"And may I know now?"

"Yes, in this poor room John Calvin held the first secret meetings of the reformers. He is now triumphant and powerful at Geneva, but his souvenir is sufficient to render these damp walls more precious to us than the golden arabesques of the Louvre."

"And who are these who are present?"

"His disciples. Theodore de Bèze his pen, and La Renaudie his sword."

"Monsieur d'Exmès," said Theodore de Bèze, "you have been introduced here with some precautions, but do not, I entreat, think of us as dangerous conspirators. I hasten to assure you, that, if the heads of our religion meet here three times a week, it is only to communicate news of progress of the reformation, or to receive neophytes who wish to share our perils and our principles. We thank M. de Coligny for bringing you here, for you would indeed be an acquisition to our cause."

"And I, gentlemen," said another man, advancing, "am a humble dreamer attracted by the light of your ideas."

"But it will not be long, Ambroise, before you are counted among our most illustrious brethren," said La Renaudie. "Brothers, he whom I present to you is now obscure, but I feel certain that we shall soon be proud to number amongst us, the surgeon, Ambroise Paré."

"Oh, M. le Capitain."

"By whom has M. Paré been educated?" asked Bèze.

"By the minister Chaudien," said Paré.

"And have you abjured solemnly?"

"Not yet, I wish to be sincere. I confess that I still have some doubts, and certain points are still too obscure to me—for me to give heart and soul to the cause. It is to clear them up that I wish to attend these meetings; that I would go if necessary to Calvin himself, for truth and liberty are my passions."

"Well said!" cried the admiral.

"Now," said Gabriel, rising, "I know where I am, and for what purpose my generous friend brought me here, where are united those whom Henri calls heretics and enemies. However, I have much more need of instruction than M. Paré. I have acted much, but reflected little, and he would do me a service by recounting to me what reasons or what interests have gained for the reformers his brilliant intellect."

"Not interest," replied he, "for that would have chained me to the party of the court. It is against tyranny that I protest. I wish that each man should be permitted to judge for himself, and that neither priest nor king should have the power to say, 'You must believe and worship thus.' For these principles I would brave all persecution."

"There is both hardihood and revolt in your words, monsieur," said Coligny.

"Revolt—no; but revolutions."

"You must belong to us," said Bèze; "what do you wish?"

"Only the favour of conversing with you sometimes, and laying before you my difficulties as they arise."

"You shall have more; you shall correspond directly with Calvin."

"Such an honour for me!" cried Paré, colouring.

"Yes, he must know you, and you him. A disciple such as you is worthy of such a master. You will give your letters to La Renaudie, who will forward them to Geneva."

"A thousand thanks. Now, I regret to say, I must leave you; many sufferers wait for me."

"Go, then, we part friends and brothers."

Ambroise Paré then left, proud and joyful.

"Alas!" Gabriel then said, "by the side of this disinterested devotion my egotism must appear despicable. Reform, I must admit, would be to me only a means and not an end. In your great and disinterested battle I should fight for my own purposes, and I feel that my motives would be too personal to justify me in joining so pure a cause; you will do well, therefore, to reject me."

"You, doubtless, calumniate yourself," said M. de Bèze, "even if your views be less elevated than those of M. Paré. The ways of God are various, and He does not lead all by the same paths."

"Yes," added Renaudie, "and we seldom obtain such answers as we received from him when we asked, 'What do you desire.'"

"But," said Gabriel, sadly, "M. Paré only asked 'have you truth and justice on your side?' while I am forced to inquire, are you sure that you have sufficient strength, if not to conquer, at least to combat."

They all look surprised, but Bèze replied, "Whatever may be the motive, M. d'Exmès, which dictates this question, I will reply to it fully and freely. We have, thank God, henceforward, not only truth but strength with us. Our progress has been rapid and incontestable; within the last three years reformed churches have been established in Paris, Blois, Tours, Poitiers, Marseilles, and Rouen. You may see for yourself the immense crowds that we attract to our meetings at the Pré-aux-clercs, nobles and people abandon the fêtes to come and sing with us the psalms of Clement Marot. I believe a fifth of the population to be with us."

"In that case before long I may take an active part among you."

"But if we had been less strong?"

"I confess that I should have chosen other allies."

"Oh!" cried Coligny, "do not judge him severely my friends. I have seen him at the siege of St. Quentin, and he who could act as he did there has no vulgar soul. But I know that he has a terrible and secret duty to perform, which does not leave him free to offer his devotion to us."

"But I wish at least to be perfectly candid," said Gabriel; "if circumstances induce me to join you, M. de Coligny will attest that I should bring you a strong arm and heart; but the truth is, that I cannot give myself wholly up to you, for I am claimed by another duty, which the wrath of God, and the wickedness of men have imposed upon me, and until this work be finished I am not master of my fate. The destiny of another demands all my exertions."

"It may be a holy devotion," said La Renaudie, "only take care, young man; for if once you belong to us you must be worthy of us. We might admit you into our ranks although you had an exclusive in-

terest from us; but the heart is deceitful. Are you sure that when you think yourself devoted to another, no personal interests enter into your mind? Are you disinterested in the end you pursue?"

"Yes," said Bèze, "we do not ask for your secrets, but look into your heart and ask whether, were you able to reveal them to us you could do so without shame or embarrassment; for a pure cause must be defended by pure hands, otherwise we should bring misfortune upon the cause and upon ourselves."

Gabriel listened to these men who spoke to him at once as friends and as judges, and turned pale, asking himself whether his love for Diana was not really the mainspring of his efforts on behalf of his father. At this moment ten o'clock struck. Gabriel knew he must soon be with the king, therefore, rallying himself, he replied, "You are men standing alone, before whom the most worthy of us feels himself impure. But if I join you it will not be as a chief but as a soldier. I shall be your hand and that is all; will you refuse my aid?"

"No," said Coligny, "we accept you."

"And we accept as a guarantee," said Renaudie, "the hesitation which our words awoke in your scrupulous heart."

"Thanks, gentlemen, for your confidence; I must now leave you, but I shall not forget what I have heard to-day."

"I will accompany you," said Coligny, "I wish to repeat to the king before you what I have already said to him."

"I should not have dared to ask you this favour, admiral, but I gratefully accept it."

"Let us go, then."

CHAPTER XLI.

WHERE MARIE STUART PASSES AWAY AS QUICKLY AS SHE DID FROM THE HISTORY OF FRANCE.

When Gabriel and Coligny arrived at the Louvre, the first thing that they heard was that the king did not receive that day, and they had great difficulty in obtaining admission into the building. By bribes and entreaties they managed to penetrate into the gallery outside the apartments of the king, but they could get no further. The orders were strict to admit no one, for the king was engaged with Madame de Poitiers and M. de Montmorency.

Gabriel was in despair. To have to wait again, when he had reckoned upon reaping the reward of all his toil, was maddening to him. Just then a door opened, and Marie Stuart came out. Gabriel instinctively ran towards her, crying out, "Oh! madam."

"You here at last, M. d'Exmès!" said she, smiling; "I am happy to see you again. But what are you doing here so early?"

"I wish to speak to the king, madam."

"It is really necessary that M. d'Exmès should speak to the king," said the admiral. "The subject is of great importance, and the guards will not admit him."

"I believe that the king is occupied, and I fear——"

"Oh! madam."

"Well, I will risk it," she said, and she gave orders to the guards to permit Gabriel to pass.

"Oh, thanks! madam; you ever come like a guardian angel to help me in my need."

Gabriel was already at the door of the cabinet, when it suddenly opened and the king stood before him. Resolution was not one of Henri's virtues, and, at the sudden sight of Gabriel, he started back.

Gabriel bowed respectfully, and said, "Sire, deign

to accept the expression of my respectful homage." Then, turning towards Coligny, he said, "Advance M. l'Admiral, and, according to your kind promise, repeat to His Majesty the share that I took in the defence of St. Quentin."

"What does this mean, monsieur?" cried Henri, beginning to recover himself. "How dare you and M. de Coligny thus intrude yourselves here, contrary to my orders?"

Gabriel, bold on all occasions, replied, "I thought, sire, that Your Majesty was always ready to render justice to all."

He had profited by the backward movement of the king, to enter the cabinet, where Diana de Poitiers sat, pale with surprise and rage at this bold intrusion.

"I adjure you to speak, M. de Coligny," said he, determined to persevere.

"I will do so," replied he, "for it is my duty, and my promise. Sire," he continued, turning to the king, "I repeat to you in the presence of M. d'Exmès, all that I felt myself bound to tell you in his absence. It is to him alone, that the credit of the prolonged defence of St. Quentin, even beyond the term named by your Majesty, is due. Three times, sire, M. d'Exmès saved the city, and without his courage and energy France would not be, as I trust she now is, on the road to safety."

"Come, nephew, you are too modest or too complaisant," cried Montmorency, unable any longer to control his impatience.

"No, monsieur, I am simply just. I contributed my part, and did my best for the defence of the city which had been entrusted to me, but the Vicomte d'Exmès reanimated the courage of the inhabitants, which I thought had become for ever extinct. He introduced into the city a reinforcement, the proximity of which I had no idea, and he discovered an attempted surprise on the part of the enemy, of which I had not even dreamed. I do not speak of courage in actual combat, for we all did our utmost;

but what he did accomplish, I will proclaim aloud, however it may diminish my own glory."

"Oh! I thank you, admiral," cried Gabriel, pressing his hand, "for so much openness and generosity. I expected no less from you, but it is a debt of gratitude that I shall never forget. Now, monsieur, I will detain you no longer; you have done more than your duty, and if the king will now, as a first recompense, grant me a few moments' private interview——"

"At another time," cried Henri, who had listened with a frowning aspect to all that had passed; "just now it is impossible."

"Impossible, sire!" cried Gabriel, mournfully.

"And why impossible, sire?" said Diana, to the great surprise, both of Gabriel and the king.

"What, madam!" stammered Henri, "you think——"

"I think, sire, that a king's most urgent business is to render justice to every one. Now your debt towards M. d'Exmès is legitimate and sacred."

"Doubtless," said Henri, trying to divine her meaning, "and I wish——"

"To hear M. d'Exmès immediately is justice, sire."

"But," said Gabriel, "I must speak to his majesty alone."

"M. de Montmorency is going, monsieur, and you have yourself dismissed M. de Coligny. As for me, as I was witness to the engagement entered into between you and the king, and can recall the exact terms of it, you will, I trust, allow me to remain."

"Assuredly, madam."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE OTHER DIANA.

In spite of his great power over himself, Gabriel could not restrain the paleness that overspread his

face, nor the agitation of his voice, when he addressed the king.

"Sire," said he, "it is with trembling, and yet with a profound confidence in your royal promise, that I—returned only yesterday from captivity—dare to recall to your majesty the solemn engagement which you deigned to enter into with me. Then, sire, since, by the declaration of M. de Coligny, you are aware that I have more than kept my part of that engagement, keep yours, sire, and restore to me my father."

"Monsieur," said Henri, with hesitation, and looking towards Diana, for he had accustomed himself to think of Gabriel as dead or a captive, and had not determined upon what course to take with regard to him.

Gabriel's heart beat fearfully, but he continued with a sort of despair, "It is impossible, sire, that your majesty can have forgotten your promise to me."

The king was moved in spite of himself, by the grief of the young man, and his generous instincts began to awake. "I remember all," he said.

"Ah! sire, thanks," cried Gabriel, joyfully.

But Madame de Poitiers said quietly, "Doubtless the king remembers — it is you who forget, M. d'Exmès."

Gabriel turned in astonishment, "How! madam; what have I forgotten?"

"Half your task, monsieur. You said to the king, that to purchase the liberty of the Comte de Montgomery, you would arrest the enemy in their triumphant march to Paris."

"And have I not done so, madam?"

"Yes; but you added, 'and if necessary, I will take some town of which they are masters.' That is what you said, monsieur, and what you have not done. We know of the defended city, monsieur, but where is the taken one?"

"Oh, mon Dieu!" cried Gabriel.

"You see, monsieur," continued she, coldly, "that my memory is even better than yours, but I trust that you remember now."

"Yes; it is true that I did say so, but your majesty will not insist on the impossible; and is it not impossible at this time to take a city from the English or the Spaniards? And your majesty accepted the first part of my promise, without saying that, after all my efforts—after my long captivity—I should have a second task to execute. Sire, it is to you that I speak. A city for the liberty of a man—is not that enough? You will not insist on the fulfilment of words that escaped me in my excitement, but which impose a task impossible for any man to perform."

The king was about to speak, but Diana prevented him. "Is it then more easy or more safe," said she, "to set at liberty a prisoner accused of high treason? It is not just that you should exact from the king the fulfilment of his promise when you have only half kept yours. The duties of a sovereign are not less grave than those of a son, and immense services rendered to the State could alone form an excuse to the king for altering the laws of the kingdom. You have to save your father, but the king has to guard France."

Then Gabriel, trying one last effort, cried with clasped hands, "Sire, it is to you—to your justice and to your clemency that I appeal. Sire, later, and under more favourable circumstances, I swear to take this city or to die in the attempt."

Henri, instructed by the glance of Diana, replied firmly, "Keep your promise to the end, monsieur, and then—and then only—I swear that I will keep mine."

"Is this your final determination, sire?"

"It is."

Gabriel remained for a moment overwhelmed with emotion, anger, and disappointment. Various ideas floated rapidly through his mind—he would have vengeance on this ungrateful king and perfidious woman—he would throw himself into the ranks of the reformers. It should be henceforth the sole end and aim of his life to punish, without mercy, Henri and Diana. But his father, before then, would have died. To avenge him was well, but to save him was

better. In his position, perhaps, to take a city was less difficult than to punish a king; besides, by the one he might win Diana, and by the other he would lose her for ever.

In less time than we have taken to write this, his resolution was taken, and he raised his head proudly, saying, "So be it, sire; I have decided."

"To do what?"

"Confess, sire, that my intended attempt to wrest a city from the enemy appears to you desperate and hopeless."

"It is true," replied Henri.

"In all probability this attempt will cost me my life, without producing any other result than to make me pass for a madman."

"It is not I who proposed it," said the king, "and it would be wise of you to abandon it."

"Nevertheless, I undertake it."

The king could not repress a movement of admiration.

"Only," continued Gabriel, "let there be no misunderstanding this time. Let our engagement be clear and precise. I, Gabriel, Comte d'Exmès, promise to place in your power a city now actually in the hands of the enemy; and you engage immediately afterwards to open my father's cell, and restore him to me. You promise me this?"

"I do."

"I do not ask you, sire, for a written promise, but lay your royal hand on this Bible and take this oath—'In exchange for a city to be placed in my hands by M. Gabriel de Montgomery, I engage by this sacred book to restore to him his father; and I declare that, if I violate this oath, the said Gabriel shall be absolved from all oaths of fidelity towards me and mine, and that all he may do to punish such perjury shall be lawful before God and man.'"

"By what right do you ask such an oath, monsieur?"

"By the right of a man about to die, sire."

"I swear, then," said the king; and he repeated the oath.

"Now, sire, I leave you; in two months I shall be dead, or I shall come here again to claim my father's liberty." Thus saying, he bowed and retired.

"This time he cannot escape," said Diana.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A GREAT IDEA FOR A GREAT MAN.

THE Duc de Guise occupied apartments in the Louvre. He was alone in his room when some one knocked at the door, and announced the Vicomte d'Exmès.

"The Vicomte d'Exmès!" cried he, "my young companion in arms—let him enter immediately, Thibault," and, advancing towards the door, he pressed him in his arms, saying, "Ah! it is you at last, Gabriel. Where do you come from, and what has become of you since the siege of St. Quentin? I have often thought and spoken of you."

"Really! monseigneur, have you kept a place for me in your memory?"

"You have taken care that we should not forget you. Coligny, who is worth all the rest of the Montmorencys put together, has told me some of your exploits, and yet he says that he has kept back half."

"Nevertheless, I have done too little," said Gabriel, sadly.

"Ambitious?" asked the duke.

"Yes, very ambitious," said Gabriel, with a sigh.

"However, I am glad that you have returned at last; we have great need of brave men, for France is reduced to sad extremities."

"I am ready to do all I can, monseigneur."

"I confess, Gabriel, that I find my position an embarrassing one. I have organised a force to surround and defend Paris, which is the first consideration, and shall present a formidable resistance to the enemy, should they advance; but that is nothing—there is

St. Quentin and the North. It seems to me that the best thing to be done is, by some bold stroke, to raise the spirits of the army, and revive our old glorious reputation—to assume the offensive, and not only avenge our losses, but change them into successes."

"That is also my wish," cried Gabriel, delighted with a speech which coincided so entirely with his own views.

"When and where to attempt it is the difficulty," said the duke.

"I think that I know, monseigneur."

"Is it possible? Speak, then, my friend."

"Mon Dieu, great as you are, monseigneur, I fear that you will think my project rash and hopeless."

"I am not easily frightened."

"Nevertheless, I fear that you will at first condemn my suggestion as impossible, but in truth it is only difficult and perilous."

"That is the greater attraction."

At this moment Thibault knocked at the door. "Monseigneur ordered me to tell him," said he, "when the hour arrived for the council to sit, and two o'clock is now striking. M. de St. Remy and the other gentlemen will be here immediately to accompany monseigneur."

"It is true, and I must attend. Gabriel, you shall give me all details this evening, but satisfy my curiosity, and tell me in two words what you propose to do."

"Take Calais, monseigneur."

"Take Calais!" cried the duke, starting up in surprise.

"You promised not to be astonished, monseigneur."

"But have you thought of it well—of its formidable garrison and its impregnable ramparts overlooking the sea—Calais, which has been for two hundred years in the possession of the English, and which they guard as the key of France? I love what is bold, but this is rash to folly."

"Yes, monseigneur, but it is just because it is rash and no one will dream of the attempt being made,

that we shall succeed. By keeping our intentions absolutely secret, and arriving unexpectedly, Calais will be ours in fifteen days."

"But your plans?" said the duke.

"Are simple and sure, monseigneur." Gabriel had not time to finish, for the door opened and the Comte de St. Remy entered, and announced that his majesty waited for M. de Guise.

"Can you return at eight o'clock, Gabriel?"

"I will be punctual, monseigneur;" and they quitted the Louvre.

CHAPTER XLIV.

GABRIEL'S PREPARATIONS.

ALOYSE was looking most anxiously for the return of Gabriel from the Louvre. When she saw him, she ran to him, and with eyes full of tears, cried, "God be thanked that I see you again. Have you seen the king?"

"Yes, Aloyse."

"Well?"

"Well, my good nurse, we must wait a little longer."

"Wait longer! Holy Virgin! it is difficult to wait so long."

"It would be impossible, were I not to act meanwhile." He entered into his room, and saw Martin Guerre sitting in a corner, plunged, apparently, in deep thought.

"What are you thinking of so deeply, Martin?" said he.

"Monsieur, I was endeavouring to solve the enigma of that man's story."

"And have you succeeded?"

"No, monsieur, I cannot penetrate it."

"Well, I think I see light through it. But can you for a while forget yourself, and devote all your energies to assist me?"

"Oh! monsieur, it is both my duty and my pleasure. I have been too long separated from you, and I am ready to follow you all over the world."

"Reflect, Martin, that the enterprise into which I am about to embark is full of dangers."

"Oh! we shall escape them."

"We shall risk our lives a hundred times."

"Well, if we do, peril and I are no strangers, and after having been hung I fear nothing else."

"Then you will share my fate, and follow me?"

"Anywhere, monsieur."

"And do you think that you can find me a dozen men of your own stamp, who do not fear fire and sword—who can bear cold and hunger—and will obey like angels, and fight like demons?"

"Will they be well paid?"

"A gold franc for each drop of blood, if you like. My fortune is the last thing that I consider in this task of mine."

"Oh! it is easy to find men on those terms; I can mention five or six at once, some of our old soldiers in Lorraine."

"And they must be prepared to set out at a moment's notice, and without even asking their destination."

"They will march towards glory and money blindfold, monsieur."

"Very well, I count upon them and upon you."

About six o'clock Martin Guerre entered. "Monsieur," said he, "will it please you to receive five or six of those who aspire to the honour of serving under you?"

"What! already?"

"Yes, monsieur; these are unknown to you, and my old companions will make up the dozen."

"Well, let me see them."

"I can answer for their courage, monsieur, if you will be indulgent towards certain little traits of character."

Gabriel examined the candidates, and approved of them as men likely to suit his purpose. He then

thanked Martin Guerre for the zeal and promptitude he had displayed, and took his way to the Louvre to keep his appointment with the Duc de Guise.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE MESSENGER.

Towards the end of the month of November, three weeks after the departure of Gabriel from Calais, a messenger presented himself at one of the gates of the city, and asked for Lord Wentworth, to whom he was bringing the ransom of his late prisoner. He was introduced into the governor's room, who received from him the money, and then said,—

"Has M. le Vicomte d'Exmès charged you simply to deliver this money without any message?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the messenger, with a stupid look of astonishment; "my master gave no other orders."

"Oh!" said Lord Wentworth, with a disdainful smile, "he has become more reasonable I see; the air of the court of France is full of forgetfulness."

"Has your lordship any message for my master?"

"No,—yet stay—you may tell him that I shall be at his orders until the 1st of January. He will understand."

"I will tell him, my lord."

On leaving Lord Wentworth, the messenger walked about Calais for some time, and then took his way to the house of Pierre Peuquoy, when he announced himself as coming from Gabriel.

"Speak," cried Pierre, "we knew he would not forget us; what do you bring from him?"

"His compliments and thanks, this purse of gold and this message—'remember the 5th,' which he said you would understand."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"But have you no message for my cousin Jean or my sister Babette?"

"No, I have said all that I was told."

"One moment," said Jean; "if you are in the service of M. d'Exmès you must know among your companions one named Martin Guerre."

"Oh! yes, the squire; I know him well."

"Did he know you were coming here?"

"Yes, he was present when I set off."

"And he sent no message to any one in this house?"

"None at all."

"He perhaps told you to give your message secretly. But if so, learn that the precaution has become needless; we know the truth, for the grief of the person to whom Martin Guerre owes reparation has revealed all to us. But if you have any scruples, this person shall come and speak to you alone."

"Ma foi," replied the man, "I swear to you I do not understand a word of all this."

"Enough, Jean," interrupted Pierre, "you have dwelt long enough upon our shame."

"Will you please to count the money?" said the messenger.

"It is needless. Tell your master that we remember the 5th, and add also, that we shall expect him within a month, and that if he remembers so well the money lent, he should not forget a secret confided to him of much more importance."

"I will tell my master all you say."

The messenger then left, and after many détours, at last regained the gates and left Calais. He walked briskly for about an hour, and then sat down on a bank to rest, while a smile passed over his face.

"They appear to me very mysterious in this city of Calais," thought he, "and M. d'Exmès and Martin Guerre seem to have left some enmities behind them. However, I have all I wished—I had neither pen nor paper, it is true, but it is all in my head, and with the plan of M. d'Exmès to help me, I can draw the whole

place. All is clear; the Duc de Guise will be content, and in six weeks we shall be masters of Calais as sure as my name is Strozzi."

It was indeed Pierre Strozzi, one of the cleverest engineers of the fourteenth century, who had gone to Calais as Gabriel's messenger.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE 31ST OF DECEMBER, 1557.

MADAME DE CASTRO appeared to hate the governor daily more and more. She sought every pretext to avoid seeing him, and when forced to do so, her reception of him was icy cold. He, on his part, always endeavoured to remain the perfect gentleman who had left at the court of Mary of England such a reputation for courtesy. He overwhelmed her with attentions; she was served with princely luxury, and her room was filled with costly presents which he had sent from London expressly for her, but which, however, she scarcely looked at.

Each day he said to himself that it would be far better for his own peace of mind to accept the ransom offered by Henry the Second, and set Diana at liberty. But this would restore her to Gabriel, and for this he had not courage. On the 31st of December, 1557, he had succeeded in obtaining admittance into her room. To see her, even though severe to him, and to hear her, though ironical and reproachful, had become a necessity to him. Scarcely, however, had he entered on this day, when an archer knocked at the door, and immediately entered the room.

"Who dares to interrupt me thus?" cried Lord Wentworth.

"Pardon me, my lord, but Lord Derby sent me in haste."

"And for what?"

"Because he has just heard that an advanced

guard of two thousand French arquebusiers were seen yesterday ten leagues from Calais."

"Ah!" cried Diana, joyfully.

"And for this nonsense you have had the audacity to interrupt me!" said Lord Wentworth. "Lord Derby takes mole-hills for mountains; go, and tell him so from me."

"Lord Derby wishes the guards to be doubled, my lord."

"Let them remain as they are, and do not trouble me again with these ridiculous fancies. And you, madam," said he to Diana, when the archer was gone, "do not rejoice too soon; I can give you the explanation of this false alarm. Either MM. Guise and Nevers wish to revictual Andres and Boulogne, or else they are simulating an attempt against Calais, and then retracing their steps they will endeavour to regain one of those places."

"And who tells you, my lord," cried Diana, imprudently, "that it is not a feigned attack upon some other place to conceal a real one upon Calais?"

Happily she had to deal with a firm conviction. "I have already had the honour of telling you, madam," replied Lord Wentworth, "that Calais is a town which is impregnable. Before they can approach it, they must take the forts St. Agatha and Nieullay. This would occupy a fortnight, and during that period, England would have time to send us reinforcements, and all necessary supplies. Take Calais! I cannot help laughing when I think of it."

At this moment Lord Derby himself entered the room. "My lord," cried he, "I was right! The French are actually advancing on Calais in force."

"It is impossible!" cried Lord Wentworth, changing colour, in spite of his assurance. "Some rumour——"

"Alas! no. It is unfortunately a fact," interrupted Lord Derby.

'Speak lower, Derby," said Lord Wentworth, approaching him. "What do you mean?"

"The French have already attacked St. Agatha. Nothing was ready to receive them, and I much fear that they are already masters of this fort, which is the bulwark of Calais."

"Well! they are still far off."

"Yes, but there is no other obstacle to their progress except Nieullay, and that is only two miles distant."

"Have you sent reinforcements, Derby?"

"Yes, my lord, excuse me, without, and in fact against, your orders."

"You did well."

"But they must have arrived too late."

"Who knows? Do not let us be cast down. We will go at once to Nieullay, and even if they have taken St. Agatha we will soon drive them out of it again."

"God grant it."

"Who is in command of the enemy—do you know?"

"Probably M. de Guise. My informant saw no one but your old prisoner, the Vicomte d'Exmès."

"Devil take him!" cried the governor, furiously. "Come, Derby."

Diana had overheard a great part of this conversation, though it was carried on in a low tone, and her heart beat with joy.

CHAPTER XLVII.

DURING THE CANNONADE.

Lord Derby was not deceived in his conjectures. The troops of M. de Guise and M. de Nevers had arrived unexpectedly, thanks to a forced march, before the fort of St. Agatha. Three thousand men had carried the fort by surprise in less than an hour. Lord Wentworth arrived with Lord Derby at Nieullay only in time to see his troops flying for refuge to the second outwork of Calais.

"These French must be mad," cried he, "but we will make than pay dearly for their folly. Two centuries ago Calais held out for a year against the English, and in their hands it will hold out for ten. But before the end of the week we shall see our enemies in flight: they have gained this first success by surprise, but now that we are on our guard we may laugh at this attack of M. de Guise."

"Shall you send to England for reinforcements?" asked Lord Derby.

"It is quite needless. If these men persist in their folly, before three days, and while we hold them at bay, the English and Spanish troops already in France will come to our assistance; and at any time, if necessary, a message to Dover would bring us troops in twenty-four hours. At present it is unnecessary—our nine hundred men and good walls will give them plenty to do."

By the next day, however, the French had crossed the bridge, and were attacking the fort. It was then, amidst the noise of artillery, that a sad and solemn family scene took place in the old house of the Peuquoys.

As the questions addressed by them to the messenger of the Vicomte d'Exmès must have already informed the reader, Babette had no longer been able to hide from her brother and cousin her tears and the cause of them. She was, indeed, unhappy, for the reparation which the pretended Martin Guerre owed to her was necessary now, not only to herself, but to her child. However, in admitting her fault, she did not add that Martin was married, and that she had consequently no hope. She tried to deceive herself on this point, and to think that Gabriel must have been mistaken.

On the 1st of January she received a summons from Pierre. She obeyed, pale and trembling.

"Sit down, Babette," said Pierre. "At first," he continued, "when moved by our alarm and our entreaties, you confided to us the cause of your grief. I could not, I confess, control my anger, and I re-

gret to say I upbraided and even threatened you; but fortunately Jean interposed between us."

Babette turned her grateful and tearful eyes towards her cousin.

"That was but natural," said Jean, "for it was not the way to cure your ills to afflict you still further."

"So I now feel," continued Pierre. "Besides, your tears and repentance touched me; I pity you, Babette, and forgive you the disgrace that you have brought upon our hitherto stainless name."

"God will be merciful to you, brother, as you have been merciful to me."

"And then, also, Jean reminded me that your misfortune was not irreparable, and that he who led you into error ought to make atonement for it."

Babette hung her head.

"However," continued Pierre, "we have heard nothing from Martin Guerre or his master on the subject; but now that the French are before the walls, and doubtless they are with them, I wish to ask you, Babette, how we are to behave towards them. Are they to be friends or enemies?"

"Whichever you please, brother," answered she, frightened.

"But, Babette, what do you imagine to be their intentions?"

"I imagine nothing, I only wait."

"Then you do not know whether the roaring of the cannon which serves as an accompaniment to my words announces liberators whom we may bless, or traitors whom we must punish? You are not ignorant, Babette, that I have always looked upon the English as foreigners and oppressors, and three months ago no music would have seemed so sweet to me as that which is now sounding in my ears. Now in the plebeian hands of your brother rests, perhaps, at this moment, the fate of this city. Yes, these poor hands, blackened by daily toil, can give to the King of France the keys of Calais."

"And you hesitate!" cried Babette.

"Not if I could give them up to the king himself,

or to M. de Guise; but it is to M. d'Exmès that I must give them, and, although I should be proud to share this work with my late guest whose squire should become my brother, I should hesitate to do so with a gentleman who has pitilessly contributed to our dishonour."

"M. d'Exmès, so good—so compassionate."

"It is not the less true that he knows of your misfortune by your confession as his squire does by his conscience, and yet they both remain silent."

"But what could M. d'Exmès do?"

"He could on his return to Paris have sent Martin back, and ordered him to marry you; instead of which he sends a stranger with a purse of gold."

"No, no, he could not," cried Babette, sadly; "it would have been useless."

"What do mean—are you mad, Babette?"

"No, unfortunately, for the mad forget. Ah! pardon me once more, my brother; I wished to hide it—he told me——"

"What?" cried Pierre.

"Yes, the day he went away, when I begged him to give Martin this ring, I did not tell him, but he must have known—he said that—that—Martin Guerre was married already."

"Ah! wretch," cried Pierre, quite beside himself, and he rushed with uplifted arm towards his sister.

She sank fainting on the floor.

Jean ran to his cousin, crying, "Hold, Pierre; it is not the victim, but the traitor, that you must strike."

"It is true," said Pierre, ashamed of his passion, and he drew back with gloomy and sombre expression while Jean tried to recall Babette to consciousness.

"What is the matter? Oh, my cousin!" were her exclamations on recovering and recognising Jean.

Jean looked almost happy. "Hope, Babette, hope!" said he.

Then seeing her brother, she said, "Pardon me, Pierre."

"Reassure yourself," said he; "you have suffered

enough, and I will reproach you no longer. I also say, hope."

"What can I hope for now?"

"Not reparation, but vengeance."

"And I," whispered Jean, "promise both."

Babette looked surprised, but Pierre advancing towards her, said, "Once more, sister, I pardon and love you, but my anger will fall doubly on him."

"Oh, brother!"

"Yes, for him no pity. But to his master I owe reparation."

"I thought," cried Jean, "that he could not have deceived us."

"Jean, do you know what that cannon tells us? It intimates that M. d'Exmès is here, and it also intimates—'remember the 5th.'"

"Oh!" cried Babette, "if Martin also be here.—But no—his master must have dismissed him, or at all events will not have brought him here."

"I will follow him to Paris," cried Pierre.

"Ah! that is just what I fear—not for him, for I love him no longer—but for you, Pierre, and you, Jean."

"Then, Babette," said Jean, "in a contest between us, it would be for me and not for him that you would fear?"

"Ah! Jean, that question is indeed a punishment to me. Between you, so good and kind, and him so vile and barbarous, could I hesitate now?"

"Thanks," said Jean, "you make me happy."

"He will be punished," said Pierre. "But now let us speak of him no longer; we have much to do, and only three days to prepare. We must see our friends and make all ready for the 5th."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

UNDER THE TENT.

THREE days after, on the evening of the 4th, the French, in spite of Lord Wentworth's predictions, continued to progress. They had taken the fort of Nieullay, with a large store of arms and ammunition —a result well worth the three days' hard fighting they had gone through.

"It is a frightful dream!" cried Lord Wentworth, as his soldiers fled, and he himself was forced to fly with them.

"Happily," said Lord Derby, "Calais and the old castle can hold out some days longer, and the way to England is still open."

Lord Wentworth was forced to stifle his pride and send an express to Dover for reinforcements, and meanwhile he concentrated all his energies on the defence of the old castle, which was the most valuable part of Calais.

Let us now see what was passing among the assailants. Let us enter this tent placed a little to the right of the French camp, for here we shall find Gabriel and his little troop of volunteers. Gabriel, seated in a corner, seemed buried in profound thought. Martin Guerre was seated near him mending the strap of a sword-belt, and not far from them on a heap of cloaks lay, moaning, a wounded man. The rest were grouped around, some playing with dice, and others conversing.

At a more doleful groan from the wounded man, Gabriel looked up and said, "What time is it, Martin?"

"I think about six o'clock, monsieur."

"And at six the surgeon promised to come. Ah! here he is, I think."

Gabriel saw, to his surprise, M. Ambroise Paré

enter the tent. "M. Paré!" he exclaimed, "I did not know you were here."

"I always try to be where I can be most useful," he replied.

"I am glad of it, for I have need of your skill."

"Not for yourself, I hope."

"No; for one of my men, who this morning received a thrust from a lance in the shoulder."

"In the shoulder—that is probably not dangerous."

"I fear it is, for one of his comrades tried so unskilfully to withdraw the lance, that he broke it, and the iron head remained in the wound."

M. Paré made a grimace of bad augury, but he said, "Let us see, however."

They led him to the patient, when, taking off the linen which covered the shoulder, he examined the wound. He looked grave, but said, "It will be nothing."

"Then can I fight again to-morrow?" asked the man.

"I fear not," said Paré, probing the wound.

"Ah! you hurt me."

"I know it; courage, my friend."

"Oh, I have that; besides, this is bearable. Will it be worse when you extract that cursed lance?"

"No, for here it is," said Paré, holding it out.

"I am much obliged to you, monsieur," said the patient.

A murmur of astonishment and admiration greeted the achievement of M. Paré.

"What! is all finished?" cried Gabriel. "It is wonderful."

"The patient was not delicate," said Paré.

"Nor the operator unskilful," said a voice from behind, at which every one drew back.

"M. le Duc de Guise!" said Paré.

"Yes, and who is delighted with your skill. By St. Francis, I have been at the hospital, where I have seen doctors who do more harm to our men with their instruments than the English with their weapons; but you drew out the head of that lance as

easily as if it had been a white hair. What is your name, monsieur?"

"Ambroise Paré."

"Well, your fortune is made on one condition."

"What is that, monseigneur?"

"That if I am wounded, you will take charge of me, and will treat me as unceremoniously as you did that poor devil there."

"Monseigneur, I will do so; all men are alike when they suffer. But if your grace will permit, I will close and bandage this wound, for so many others are waiting for me."

"Do so, and do not think of me."

"Now that thing is out, I suppose I am nearly well?" said the patient.

"Yes."

"Then, when can I fight again?"

"Fight! I order you eight days of absolute rest, with low diet."

"Low diet if you like, but let me fight."

"You are mad; if you rise, fever will seize you, and you will die."

"I beg you, monseigneur, to permit me to send Malewort to the hospital, for if he hears the sound of battle, he is certain to get up in spite of all orders."

"Send him by some of your men."

"I think I shall want my men to-night, monseigneur."

"I will send a litter for him," said Paré, as he took leave.

When he was gone, Gabriel and the duke with drew into a corner of the tent to talk in private.

CHAPTER XLIX.

LITTLE BARKS SOMETIMES SAVE GREAT SHIPS.

"Well, monseigneur, are you content with what we have done?" asked Gabriel.

"Yes, my friend, content with what we have done, but, I confess, not sanguine as to the result."

"What is wrong, then? We have, I think, surpassed all your hopes; in four days we have taken the two principal defences of Calais, and the English cannot hold out more than forty-eight hours longer."

"Yes, but that is enough to ruin all."

"Monseigneur must permit me to doubt that."

"No, friend; my experience does not deceive me. Except for some unforeseen event or chance beyond our calculation, our enterprise is doomed—believe me."

"Not so, monseigneur," said Gabriel, with a smile.

"Gabriel, the strange and hazardous attempt into which you have beguiled me, could only succeed through the surprise of the garrison. You calculated rightly, and we have done well, so far; and you were also right in saying that Lord Wentworth would be too proud to send for assistance. Thus we have taken St. Agatha by surprise, and Nieullay by storm."

"So that now," said Gabriel, "if reinforcements arrive, they will find that instead of the guns of Lord Wentworth to support them, they will have the batteries of the Duc de Guise to oppose them."

"Certainly, but unfortunately this is not the only approach to the city. You forget the Risbank, or rather the Octagon tower, overlooking the sea, which commands the whole port. If they send to Dover, they will have, in a few hours, enough men to hold this place for years. Lord Wentworth, convinced at last, has now sent for this aid, and by this time to-morrow it will be here, and will oppose to us an invincibly superior force. Even if we hold our ground, all the English and Spaniards, from Ham and St. Quentin, will surround and besiege us in their turn, and we shall be taken between two armies."

"Then what do you think of doing, monseigneur, to prevent this catastrophe?"

"Our only chance—a poor one, alas!—is to try to-morrow, to carry the old castle by assault. It is less rash, at least, than to await the arrival of fresh

English troops. The French fury, as they say in Italy, may possibly overcome these formidable walls."

"No, it will fail," said Gabriel; "we shall lose half our men, and be repulsed."

"If so, we must retreat at once, to save the remnant of our army for better times."

"The conqueror of Metz recommend a retreat!"

"Better than to persist after defeat, like M. de Montmorency at St. Laurent."

"It would, nevertheless, be disastrous for the glory of France and your reputation, monseigneur."

"Alas! I know it. If I had succeeded, I should have been a hero—a demi-god. If I fail, I shall be only a vain and presumptuous man who merits his fall. It will adjourn, and perhaps destroy, all my hopes and ambitions."

"I see you, monseigneur, in one of those moments of doubt, which sometimes in the midst of the greatest works seize the greatest minds. However, it is certainly not the great genius and captain to whom I have the honour of speaking, who would lightly have engaged in so great an enterprise. You must have foreseen all this; how comes it that you are at a loss now?"

"Mon Dieu! Gabriel, I think your youthful enthusiasm and assurance fascinated and blinded me."

"Monseigneur!"

"Oh! I am not reproaching you; your idea was grand and patriotic. Nevertheless, remember, I founded my objections on the extremity to which we are now reduced, and you destroyed them."

"And how?"

"You promised me that, if in a few days we could master the forts of St. Agatha and Nieullay, your friends in the city would place in your hands the fort of Risbank, and that thus Calais could neither be succoured by sea or land. You must remember this."

"Well, monseigneur?"

"Well, your hopes have been deceived, have they not? Your friends in Calais, have they not deceived you? They are not yet sure of our success, and

they will only come forward in case we need them no longer."

"Excuse me, monseigneur, who told you so?"

"Your silence. Now is the time to save us, yet you do not speak, and your friends make no sign."

"I love better to act than to speak."

"What! do you still hope?"

"Yes, monseigneur, or I should not live."

"Then the fort of Risbank——?"

"Will belong to us if I am alive."

"But it must be to-morrow."

"And you shall have it to-morrow, unless I fall before then."

"Gabriel, what are you about to do? Brave some mortal danger—run some insensate risk? I will not have it—France has need of men like you."

"Do not be uneasy, monseigneur; if the risk is great, so is the aim. Think only of profiting by the result, and leave the means to me."

"Tell me, at least, how I may aid you."

"Monseigneur, I have a request to make."

"Speak."

"To-morrow, about eight in the morning, send some one to the promontory from whence the fort of Risbank is seen. If the English flag continue to float then, hazard then the desperate assault you spoke of, for I shall have failed—that is to say, I shall be dead. Lose no time in regretting me, but prepare at once for your last grand effort, and God grant it may succeed. You would have at least four hours before the English succours could arrive."

"But you, Gabriel, have you any chance of success?"

"Yes, I have; therefore be patient, and do not give the signal for assault too soon. You will only have to continue quietly the works of the miners, and wait for the right moment if, at eight o'clock, you see on the fort of Risbank the standard of France——"

"The standard of France!" cried the duke.

"Where its view would, I think," continued Gabriel, "arrest the ships coming from England."

"I think so too. But how will you do this?"

"Leave me my secret, monseigneur. I compromise neither you nor the army, and shall employ no men but my own volunteers."

"And why this pride?"

"It is not pride; but, if your grace remembers, you promised me that if by execution as well as by idea I contributed in an important way to the taking of Calais, you would declare this, not publicly, where all the honour is due to you as chief, but privately to the king."

"Certainly, Gabriel, that is no great boon; and, publicly or privately, I shall always be ready to do justice to you."

"All I wish is, that the king should know it."

"But can I not assist you to-night?"

"Yes, monseigneur, if you will give me the password, so that I may go out with my men when I wish."

"It is 'Calais, and Charles.'"

"And, monseigneur, if I fall, will you remember that Madame Diana de Castro is a prisoner of Lord Wentworth's, and may I claim your protection for her?"

"I will not forget her. Anything else?"

"Yes, monseigneur, I am to be assisted to-night by a fisherman, named Anselmo; if he fall with me, I have written to Elyot my steward to provide for his wife and children; will you see that this is done?"

"I will; is that all?"

"All; only, if you see me no more, think of me with some kindness; and now I will say adieu!"

"Do not be sad, Gabriel, something tells me that we shall meet again."

"If so, it will be in Calais as a French town."

"In that case you will have saved my honour and that of France from great peril."

"Little barks, monseigneur, sometimes save great ships."

CHAPTER L.

OBSCURI SOLA SUB NOCTE.

When Gabriel returned to his place, he made a sign to Martin Guerre, who immediately rose and left the tent, but returned in about a quarter of an hour, bringing with him a man poorly clad.

"Monsieur," said he, "here is our man."

"You are the fisherman, Anselmo?" said Gabriel.

"Yes, monsieur."

"And you know the service we require of you?"

"Your squire has told me, and I am ready."

"He has told you that we run considerable risk in this expedition?"

"I knew that as well as he could tell me."

"And yet you have come?"

"I am at your orders, monsieur."

"It is the act of a brave man."

"Rather of a despairing one. I risk my life every day for a few fish, and often catch none; it is then no great thing to risk it for you who pay me handsomely, and promise to provide for my wife and children. Certainly it is an awful night to go on the sea, but that is as much your affair as mine, and you have paid me in advance; I am content, and I trust you are so."

"Can your boat hold fourteen persons?"

"It has held twenty."

"You will need help in rowing?"

"Oh, yes, I shall have enough to do to attend to the helm and the sail, if that can be put up.

"Well, my men can do that."

"But where are we to land?"

"At the fort of Risbank."

"At the fort of Risbank!"

"Yes, what objection have you?"

"It is scarcely possible; it is all rock."

"Do you refuse to take us?"

"Ma foi, no; I will do my best and take you there if I can."

"At what time must we be ready?"

"You wish to arrive at four o'clock?"

"Yes, not sooner."

"Then we must allow two hours for the sea, and one from here to the place where we embark."

"Then we will set out at one o'clock."

"That will do well."

"We must now warn our men."

"Comrades," cried Martin, "there is an expedition for to-night."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried many voices.

"What sort of work?" asked one.

"A surprise. Now you had better all sleep for some hours, and we will wake you when necessary."

They were soon all asleep except Gabriel, who could not rest. Towards one o'clock he awoke his men, who got up and armed in silence, and then went quietly out of the tent.

CHAPTER LI.

BETWEEN TWO ABYSSES.

THE fort of Risbank, or the Octagon tower, was built, as we have said, at the entrance of the port of Calais, and its black and formidable mass rested on a huge bed of rock against which the sea broke in stormy weather. On the night in question the sea was very menacing, and was uttering those immense and sorrowful groans which make it resemble a soul in trouble.

When the sentinels were changed, the new comer, after looking anxiously over the sea, moved with a strong arm his sentry-box, and drew from underneath it a huge rope-ladder, one end of which he fastened firmly to the top of the tower, while the other, which was

weighted with two heavy balls of lead, fell to the rocks at its base. Scarcely had he finished when the night patrol passed; but he was again at his post, and they observed nothing.

On the sea, after more than two hours of extraordinary exertion, a boat manned by fourteen men had at last reached the foot of the tower. A wooden ladder was placed against the rock, which reached to a ledge, upon which five or six men could stand. One by one these bold adventurers climbed the ladder, and when they arrived at the ledge continued to ascend the rock by the help of their hands and feet. The night was dark, and the rock slippery, and one of the men lost his footing and fell into the sea. Luckily the last of the fourteen men was still in the boat which he was vainly trying to fasten before he began the ascent.

The man who had fallen, and who had had the courage to utter no cry, swam vigorously towards the boat into which the other drew him, saying,—

"What! is it you, Martin; how came you to slip?"

"Better I than another who might have cried out."

"Well, as you are here help me to fasten the boat to this great root."

"The root will not hold it, monsieur, and the boat will be lost."

"I see nothing better to do."

They secured it, but had scarcely left it and commenced the ascent when a violent wave broke it from its fastenings and carried it out into the sea.

"There goes our boat," cried Martin, "and if your friends be not there, or anything goes wrong, all hope or chance of retreat is taken from us."

"Well, so much the better; now we must succeed or die. Our companions must have arrived at the foot of the tower—let us hasten to join them, and be careful, Martin, not to slip again."

After a hard climb they reached the others who were waiting anxiously for them on the rock at the foot of

the tower, Gabriel perceived, with unspeakable joy, the rope-ladder, hanging from the top.

"You see, my friends," said he, "that we are expected. Thank God for it, for there is no retreat for us—our bark is carried away. So forward, and may God help us. The cord and the fastenings are substantial, I hope?"

"They are like iron, monsieur; thirty men might go upon it."

Then slowly and silently these fourteen intrepid men hazarded their lives one after another on this frail ladder swayed by the wind. It was nothing as long as Gabriel, who went last, was only a few steps from the foot; but, as they advanced, the ladder shook beneath them, and the peril increased frightfully. It would have been a terrible spectacle to have seen those men scaling silently this black wall at the top of which was a possible death, and at the bottom a certain one.

At the hundred and fiftieth step, Yvounet, the first man, stopped, as agreed on, and all the others did the same. They were to rest there long enough to repeat two paters and two aves. When Martin had finished his, he saw with astonishment that Yvounet did not move. He thought he had been too quick, and repeated a third pater and ave: still Yvounet did not stir. Then, although they were only about one hundred feet from the summit, and it had become dangerous to speak, Martin struck gently the legs of Yvounet, saying, "Go on."

"I cannot," replied he.

"Why not?"

"I am so giddy."

A cold perspiration broke out on Martin's brow, for if Yvounet were to fall, they must all fall with him. Not knowing what to do, he turned a little towards Anselmo, who followed him, and whispered,—"Yvounet is giddy."

This dreadful news was soon passed down to Gabriel by the terrified men.

CHAPTER LII.

ARNOLD DU THILL STILL EXERCISES A FATAL INFLUENCE OVER MARTIN GUERRE.

It was a moment of terrible anguish to Gabriel, with the sea below him, and twelve trembling men clinging to the ladder above him. Happily he was not a man to lose courage, so without thinking of the danger of the attempt, he clung by the side of the ladder, and so passed the men before him, until he arrived by the side of Martin Guerre.

"Will you advance?" he then said, in an imperious voice, to Yvounet.

"It is impossible—I feel that if my feet or my hands quit the ladder, I shall fall."

"We shall see," said Gabriel; and raising himself a little, he placed his poniard against Yvounet's back, saying, "Do you feel the point of my poniard?"

"Yes, monsieur; oh! have pity on me."

"The blade is sharp," replied Gabriel, calmly; "listen, Yvounet; Martin will pass before you, and I will remain behind—if you do not follow him I swear to heaven that you shall not fall, for I will pin you to the wall with my poinard, and we will all pass over your body."

"Oh! pity, monsieur, and I will obey," said Yvounet, who was cured by a still stronger fear.

"Martin, pass on," said Gabriel.

Martin advanced as he had seen his master do and soon found himself in front, and advanced bravely, followed by Yvounet.

"Pardieu," thought Martin, "my master has found a sovereign cure for giddiness."

As his head began to appear above the wall a voice asked,—

"Is it you?"

"Yes."

"It was time, for the third round will pass in five minutes."

"Good, we will receive them," and he stepped up.

"What is your name?" asked the man, trying to distinguish him in the darkness.

"Martin Guerre."

He had scarcely uttered the words when Pierre Peuquoy—for it was he—gave him a furious push which precipitated him into the abyss. He uttered a despairing cry as he fell—happily without striking his companions.

Yvounet now arrived at the top, and after him Gabriel and the others, but they met with no resistance,

"What madness has possessed you?" cried Gabriel, seizing Pierre by the arm. "What had Martin done to you?"

"To me nothing, but to Babette——"

"Oh! I had forgotten. But poor Martin—it was not him—can we not save him?"

"Save him after a fall of two hundred and fifty feet on to the rocks?" cried Pierre, with a hoarse laugh. "Come! M. d'Exmès, you had better think of saving yourself and your companions."

"Yes, my companions — my father and Diana," murmured Gabriel, "but my poor Martin——"

"This is no time to lament the guilty," replied Pierre.

"Guilty! he was innocent. I will prove it to you. But you are right—this is not the time. Are you still disposed to serve us?"

"I am devoted to France and to you."

"Then what must we do now?"

"The round is about to pass and you must seize and gag the four men who compose it—but here they are."

As he spoke the patrol appeared. If they had given an alarm all might have been lost, but before they had time to utter a cry they were thrown down, bound, and gagged.

"Now, monsieur," said Pierre, "we must make sure of the other sentinels, and then descend boldly to the guard-room. We have two posts to carry, but you need not fear being overwhelmed by numbers, for more than half the city guard, gained over by Jean and myself, are ready to help you. I will go down first and inform them of your success, while you seize the sentinels."

"Ah! how I should thank you, Pierre, but for this death of Martin Guerre; and yet this crime was a justice in your eyes."

"Once more, leave that to God and my conscience. Attend now to your share of the work to be done, as I will to mine."

Many of the sentinels were favourable to the French, and the few who resisted were soon disarmed. Pierre soon returned, bringing Jean and other friends, and thus reinforced they descended boldly to the guard-room. Most of the men were asleep in their beds and were easily taken, and the tumult, for it was not a combat, only lasted a few minutes. Before six o'clock struck, the whole fort belonged to the French; all who resisted were secured, but large numbers surrounded and hailed Gabriel as a deliverer. Thus was carried in less than an hour, this fort which the English had so imperfectly garrisoned, thinking it inaccessible from the sea, and which nevertheless was the key to Calais. All had been so well and quickly managed, that the fort had been surprised and the new sentinels placed before any alarm had reached the city.

"Now, monsieur," said Pierre, "I advise you to retain one-half of our men here to guard the fort, while I go with the rest into Calais itself, where I think I can aid you."

"Yes, you could aid me, if I attempt a sortie."

"Do not risk that on any account, monsieur; you are not strong enough for it, and if you assume the offensive, Lord Wentworth may retake the fort?"

"But am I to remain idle here, while the Duc de Guise and his men risk their lives?"

"Their lives are their own, and this fort belongs to France. However, when I think that one last effort is all that is needed to wrest Calais from the English, I will rise with all the inhabitants I can collect, and then you may hazard a sortie. So give me back the horn I gave to you. When, at the foot of Risbank, you hear its sound, come out without fear and share our triumph."

Gabriel thanked Pierre and they divided their men. By the time their arrangements were completed it was half-past seven. Gabriel then ascended the fort to superintend the hoisting of the French standard. When this was done he approached with hesitation the place where poor Martin Guerre, the victim of so fatal a mistake, had been thrown over. He looked down, expecting to see the mutilated body of his faithful squire on the rocks, but to his surprise he saw him bent double, suspended about half-way down the tower; a leaden waterspout had broken his fall, and on this he was hanging.

Gabriel believed him dead, but he wished his body to be brought up. One of the men who had become attached to Martin, volunteered to make the attempt; he descended the ladder, and after many efforts succeeded in bringing up the body. The surgeon declared that he was still alive, and indeed he soon began to awaken to consciousness and suffering, for he had an arm and a leg broken.

CHAPTER LIII.

LORD WENTWORTH AT BAY.

A LITTLE before eight o'clock the Duc de Guise, although with little hope, arrived with a small suite at the point indicated by Gabriel. At the first glance he uttered a cry of joy, for he recognised the standard of France floating over the tower.

"My brave Gabriel!" he cried, "he has really

performed this prodigy. Now we shall have, thanks to him, leisure to prepare for and assure the capture of Calais. Let the succours from England come, Gabriel will receive them."

"Monseigneur, it seems they come at your call," said one of his suite, who had been looking seawards with a telescope. "Are not those English sails in the distance?"

"Let me see. Yes, it is really them. Diable, they have lost no time. If we had commenced the attack we should have been done for. Now we shall see how the new governor of Risbank will behave towards them."

When the English vessels came within sight of the fort, the appearance of the French flag struck the crews as if they had seen a spectre, and to confirm the apparition, Gabriel saluted them with several discharges of cannon. In spite of their expedition the reinforcements had come too late. After some minutes of hesitation, the English fleet turned round and went back to Dover; they had brought force enough to defend Calais, but not to retake it.

This event produced a double effect. While the Duc de Guise rubbed his hands with joy, Lord Wentworth was in despair. After an anxious and restless night, he had fallen asleep towards morning, and was only coming out of his room, when Pierre Peuquoy and a body of men, pretending to have been driven vanquished from the fort of Risbank, brought the fatal news into the city. In his rage and grief he could hardly credit the tidings, and ordered that the chief of the fugitives should be brought before him. Pierre was accordingly introduced, who told a long tale how 300 men, aided no doubt by treachery which he could not fathom, had scaled the tower and surprised them.

"And who commanded these three hundred men?"

"Mon Dieu! your old prisoner, the Vicomte d'Exmès."

"Oh!" cried Lord Wentworth, with anger. He had some suspicions of Pierre, but did not feel strong

enough to let them appear. He therefore dismissed him with friendly words. Left alone, he fell into a sad and profound reverie, for which there was good reason. The city, with its feeble garrison, deprived of all hope of assistance, could not hold out above a few days—perhaps a few hours.

"Never mind," said he, pale with rage and grief; "they shall buy their victory dearly; I will hold out to the last. And as to this lover of Diana's," an infernal smile passing over his face, "I will endeavour that he shall not be able to rejoice too much in his victory."

We are not going to describe in detail the siege of Calais. The 5th and 6th were passed in immense efforts on both sides, but those of Lord Wentworth were everywhere anticipated and counteracted, and Marshal Strozzi seemed to divine all his intentions and means of defence, as though the walls were transparent.

However, the idleness to which he was condemned distressed Gabriel. After making his rounds with great vigilance, he generally came to sit by Martin's bedside. The brave squire endured his sufferings with admirable patience and equanimity. What astonished and irritated him was the conduct of Pierre Peuquoy with regard to him. The naïveté of his surprise and surmises would have dissipated any fears which Gabriel might have retained, so he disclosed to Martin what he conceived to be the truth, and that a knave had profited by his wonderful resemblance to him, to commit all sorts of crimes under his name.

This revelation Gabriel made in the presence of Jean Peuquoy, who was much distressed at hearing it. He was also very much annoyed about the wretch who had caused all these misfortunes. Martin, also, though his mind was somewhat relieved, was frightened at the idea of this man who had already done him so much injury.

"However," he said, "at all events, if I lose my leg, it will serve to distinguish me from that impostor."

On the evening of the 6th, Gabriel thought that he could distinguish a greater tumult in the city; the French had, in fact, after a fierce struggle, made themselves masters of the old castle. The 7th passed in desperate efforts on the part of the English to retake it, but the Duc de Guise repulsed them all, and it was evident that another day would see Calais in possession of the French.

About half-past three in the afternoon, Lord Wentworth, who had fought furiously all day, said to Lord Derby, "How long do you think we can hold out?"

"Not more than three hours, I fear."

"Will you answer for two?"

"Yes, unless some unforeseen event occurs."

"Then I entrust you with the command of the city. If, in two hours, we should not have succeeded in repulsing the attack of the enemy, I wish you to capitulate."

"I will, my lord, but on what conditions?"

"The best you can make—but none for me. You will bear witness in England that I have done my best, and that we held out to the last moment. Adieu! Derby." So saying, he withdrew, giving strict orders that he should not be followed.

CHAPTER LIV.

DISDAINED LOVE.

Lord Wentworth reckoned confidently on two things—that he should have two good hours uninterrupted, and that he should find his house empty, as he had sent all his people to assist in repelling the assaults of the English. Diana would be alone with her women.

All was, indeed, deserted in his house, when Lord Wentworth, haggard and wild with despair, entered abruptly into Diana's room.

"Go," said he to the attendant, "the French will

be masters here to-night, and I can protect you no longer. Go home to your father, that is your proper place."

"My lord——"

"Do you not hear what I say?" cried he, stamping his foot. "Go at once; I desire all the others to do the same."

"But, my lord——" said Diana.

"Madam, I will have it," interrupted Lord Wentworth.

The attendant, terrified, withdrew.

"Is this news true, my lord?" asked Diana.

"Yes, madam; they have taken the forts St. Agatha, Nieullay, Risbank, and the old castle, and Calais is their own. Do you rejoice?"

"Oh! my lord, I can hardly feel certain of it yet—I still doubt."

"Do you not see, madam," cried Lord Wentworth, "that I have deserted my friends that I would not be present at our defeat? In an hour and a half Lord Derby will capitulate. In an hour and a half the French will enter triumphantly into Calais, and the Vicomte d'Exmès with them. You may rejoice."

"My lord, you speak in such a tone, that I scarcely know whether to believe you or not."

"Then, madam, to convince you, I repeat that in an hour and a half the French will enter here, and Vicomte d'Exmès with them. Tremble, Madam."

"What do you mean?" cried Diana, turning pale.

"What! am I not sufficiently clear? In an hour our parts will be changed; you will be free, and I a prisoner. The Vicomte d'Exmès will come to restore you to liberty and love, and to throw me into some prison. Tremble!"

"Why then should I tremble?" cried Diana, drawing back, terrified at his fiery glance.

"It is easy to understand, madam," said he, advancing, "for I am still master for one hour."

"My lord! my lord!" cried Diana, "what do you want of me? Do not approach me, or I will cry out for help."

"Cry for help if you please; the house is empty, and the streets are deserted. No one will come near you for an hour. I am so certain of it that I have not even locked the doors."

"But in an hour hence, when they come, I will denounce you, and they will kill you."

"No," replied he, coldly; "it is I who will kill myself. Do you think I will survive the loss of Calais? But time enough for that. Now I will satisfy at once my love and my revenge."

"And I will escape thus," cried she, drawing a knife from her bosom.

But before she had time to strike, Lord Wentworth seized her little hands, tore the knife from her, and said, "Not yet, you may do what you please if you prefer dying with me to living with him."

He held her in his arms, but she sank on her knees, crying, "Pity, my lord, for your mother's sake. Remember, you are a gentleman."

"I am nothing but a man who is about to avenge himself and die," he replied, raising her in his arms. But at that moment a great tumult was heard outside, the door was thrown open, and the Vicomte d'Exmès, together with Pierre and Jean Peuquoy and several French archers appeared.

Gabriel bounded, sword in hand, towards Lord Wentworth, exclaiming, "Wretch!"

Lord Wentworth, gnashing his teeth, quitted his hold of Diana, and seized his sword which lay on a chair.

"Back," cried Gabriel to his friends, "I wish to chastise this man alone."

The two adversaries, without another word, crossed their swords. Diana had fainted.

We know already how it happened that assistance came sooner than Lord Wentworth had thought possible. Pierre Peuquoy, according to his promise, had armed all those who were secretly attached to the French party, and scarcely had Lord Wentworth quitted the ramparts, when the sound of Pierre's horn had summoned Gabriel, who, joining quickly with his

party, had appeared with his men at the breach. Lord Derby, seeing that further resistance was impossible, sent a herald to the Duc de Guise to ask for terms.

Gabriel, who had remarked the absence of Lord Wentworth with uneasiness, set off immediately for his house, as we have seen. All the doors were open, and he had entered without difficulty.

After the combat had lasted a few minutes, Lord Wentworth's sword flew from his hand, and, in endeavouring to regain it, he slipped and fell. Gabriel, full of rage, put his foot upon his breast, and was about to kill him, when Diana, who had just opened her eyes, cried feebly, "Mercy."

At the sound of her loved voice, Gabriel's rage evaporated. "Do you wish him to live, Diana?" he asked.

"Yes, Gabriel, give him time to repent."

"So be it; let the angel save the demon." Then, with his foot still on his chest, he told the archers to come and bind him and take him to prison, until the Duc de Guise should decide his fate.

"No, kill me rather!" cried Lord Wentworth.

"Do as I tell you," said Gabriel.

He was quickly obeyed, and Lord Wentworth carried off. When Diana was alone with Gabriel, she fell on her knees, crying, "I thank thee, O God, for having saved me, and through him."

CHAPTER LV.

LOVE RETURNED.

Then Diana threw herself into Gabriel's arms and cried, "And you, Gabriel, I must also bless and thank you."

"Oh, Diana, what I have suffered since I last saw you, and how long that is."

"And I also."

Then each began to relate what had happened to them during their long separation. Calais, the Duc de Guise, the vanquished and the victors, all were forgotten.

"Ah, Gabriel," said Diana, at last, "this moment, which reunites us so happily, I have often dreamed of and pictured in my captivity—it always seemed to me that my deliverance would come through you—that it would be you whom God would lead to my help."

"It was the thought of you, Diana, which drew me towards you like a loadstone, and guided me like a star. I must confess it to you and to my conscience, that, though moved by so many other powerful motives, I never should have conceived the idea of taking Calais, and carried it out by the rashest means, if you had not been a prisoner here. I trust that God will not punish me for having done good from interested motives." As he spoke, he thought of the Rue St. Jacques, and of what he had heard there, that a pure cause ought to be supported by pure hands.

But the loved voice of Diana somewhat reassured him. "God punish you, Gabriel! You, so good and generous."

"Who knows?" said he, with a sigh.

"I do," replied Diana, with her charming smile.

"Diana, you are as beautiful as an angel."

"And you as brave as a hero, Gabriel." They were sitting side by side, their hands clasped together, and as Diana spoke, she laid her head on his shoulder.

"Diana, I love you!" cried Gabriel, and their lips met in a long kiss. But suddenly he started up, and cried, "Diana, let me fly!"

"Fly! and for what reason?"

"Diana, Diana, if you were my sister——"

"Your sister!" cried she, in astonishment.

Gabriel stopped and cried, "What have I said."

"What indeed? Am I to take these terrible words for truth? What is this dreadful mystery? Am I really your sister?"

"Did I say that you were my sister?"

"But, mon Dieu, is it true?"

"No, it is not—it cannot be. I do not know—no one knows. Besides, I ought not to have told you; it was a secret which I had vowed to keep to myself. Good heavens! I have preserved my sang froid and my reason through sufferings and misfortunes, and the first blush of happiness has made me forget all my oaths."

"Gabriel," replied Diana, gravely, "God knows that it is no vain curiosity which animates me; but you have told me too much or too little for my peace of mind. You must now tell me all."

"Impossible."

"And why impossible? This secret belongs as much to me as to you, and you have no right to keep it from me."

"You are right; but as the weight of the grief, which this secret has brought upon me, overwhelms me, do not ask to partake in it."

"Yes, I wish, I demand, I exact, I pray for it, Gabriel."

"But I swore to the king——"

"Well, preserve your oath towards strangers, even towards friends; but to me, whom you allow to have an equal right to this secret, you must not keep it. Have pity on me, Gabriel; I have been sufficiently tortured already by doubts and anxieties; and even if fate forbids us to be joined in love, let us at least have a community in sorrow; we shall each suffer less if we suffer together. Gabriel, I implore you."

"Oh! Diana, if you are absolutely determined to know this secret, I can hold out no longer. Yes, my words were true. You are perhaps the daughter of the Comte de Montgomery, and my sister."

"Holy Virgin! but how can that be?"

"I would have wished, Diana, that your pure mind should have been ignorant of this history, full of crime; but I feel myself unable much longer to fight alone against my love, and you must aid me."

Then he related to her all that he knew himself.

"It is frightful!" cried Diana. "Whatever be the issue, there must be misfortune for us in the end. If I am the daughter of the Comte de Montgomery, you are my brother; if I am the daughter of the king, your father is his justly irritated enemy."

"No, Diana, we are not absolutely without hope. As I have begun, I will tell you all."

He then related to her the strange compact into which he had entered with the king, and his solemn promise to restore liberty to the Comte de Montgomery, after he had taken a city. As he spoke, hope began to irradiate Diana's countenance.

"My poor Gabriel," said she, "there is doubtless much food for thought in all you have told me, and possibly much suffering for us in the future; but do not let us brood over this, but rather endeavour to render ourselves strong and courageous. Our suspense draws, I hope, to a close; you have kept your engagements to the king, and I trust he will keep his towards you."

"I will now," said Gabriel, "go and claim from the Duc de Guise the letter he has promised me to the king, acknowledging my services, and then set off at once for Paris."

As he was speaking the door opened, and Jean Peuquoy entered, looking very rueful.

"What is the matter?" asked Gabriel, anxiously. "Is Martin worse?"

"No, M. le Vicomte, Martin has been carried to my house, and has been already visited by M. Paré, who says he shall be obliged to amputate the limb, but he thinks that Martin will do well afterwards."

"So far well."

"But M. Paré was forced to leave him, for a higher and more seriously wounded patient."

"Who?" cried Gabriel, turning pale; "Marshal Strozzi?—M. de Nevers?"

"M. le Duc de Guise, who is dying."

Gabriel and Diana each uttered a cry. "And I said that we were at an end of our suspense!" said she.

"God punishes me already," said Gabriel. "I took Calais for my father and for you—He wishes that I should have taken it only for France."

CHAPTER LVI.

LE BALAFRÉ.

NEVERTHELESS all hope was not extinct for Gabriel and Diana, for the duke lived still. Gabriel left immediately to go to him. On the way, Jean Peuquoy related to him how the duke, having raised his vizor when terms were asked for by Lord Derby, had been struck in the face by an English soldier, and that the head of the lance had remained in the wound. The duke, he said, had fallen without a word, but M. de Nevers had received the herald and concluded terms with Lord Derby; but, he added, even the conquest of such a city could hardly compensate to France for the loss of such a man.

"Where does he lie?"

"In the guard-room at the Chateau Neuf."

An immense crowd surrounded the door of the castle, and Gabriel and Jean had much trouble to force a passage. When they reached the door, which was strongly guarded, they saw M. Paré outside, looking very sad, and Pierre Peuquoy with him.

"You here, M. Paré!" cried Gabriel. "If there be a breath of life your place is by the duke."

"Will you tell that to these guards, who refuse me admittance in spite of my entreaties and menaces."

"I will make a way for you." He advanced, but was immediately stopped.

"Pardon, monsieur," said one of the guards, "but we have received orders to let no one pass."

"Your orders cannot concern the Vicomte d'Exmès, the friend of the Duc de Guise. Where is your commander?"

"He guards the inner door."

"I will go to him: come, M. Paré."

"Monsieur, you can pass if you insist on it, but he cannot."

"You are keeping the doctor from his patient."

"All the duke's doctors are already there."

"Yes; there lies the mischief," said Paré.

"I insist upon taking in M. Paré," said Gabriel.

"I dare not disobey orders."

"Oh!" said Paré, "the duke is dying during these discussions."

"You shall pass," cried Gabriel, drawing his sword; "let me see who will stop us."

The guards shrank from a contest with the Vicomte d'Exmès, to whom they were all so much indebted, and they let them pass. When they reached the inner door, Gabriel merely said, "I bring a new doctor to the duke," and passed without opposition. When they entered they saw the duke lying on a couch in the middle of the room; the iron of the lance had entered his face under the eye and had come out at the side under the ear. The wound was horrible to see, and the physicians were grouped around in consultation.

As Gabriel entered, one of them was saying, "Thus, after consultation, we have come to the painful conclusion that the wound of M. de Guise is mortal and that there is no hope; for to save him the lance-head must be withdrawn, and we should kill him in doing so."

"Then you prefer letting him die," said Paré, from behind.

The surgeon turned his head to see who had spoken, but not being able to discover, said, "Who would be rash enough to lay impious hands on the duke, and risk hastening his death?"

"I," said Paré, advancing.

"Oh! it is M. Ambroise Paré," said the surgeon, disdainfully; "but M. Paré forgets that he is not one of the duke's surgeons."

"Say, rather, that I am his only surgeon, since the others abandon him. Besides, M. d'Exmés can at-

test that the duke, a few days ago, after witnessing a successful operation that I had performed, begged me urgently to give him my aid in case of need."

"It is perfectly true," said Gabriel.

Ambroise Paré advanced to the apparently inanimate body, and examined the wound.

"Well," said the surgeon, "do you persist in your wish after examining the wound?"

"Yes."

"And what marvellous instrument do you intend to use?"

"Only my hands."

"I protest loudly," said the surgeon, "against this treatment of a dying man."

"And we also," added the others.

"Can you save him?"

"No."

"Then he belongs to me."

"We will retire," said the physicians; "we will not countenance it."

Then M. Paré took off his coat, and placed one foot on the breast of the duke.

"Take care," said the Duc de Nevers, touching M. Paré; "if you fail I cannot answer for the anger of his friends and attendants. You risk your life."

"So be it," answered he; "I am willing to risk mine to save his—but at least let all leave me quiet." Then, with his knee on the duke's breast, he took hold of the head of the lance and shook it, at first gently, then more forcibly. The duke shuddered, as if in dreadful pain.

All the bystanders were pale with terror, and Ambrose himself stopped for a second, while drops of agony covered his forehead. But he immediately returned to his work, and at the end of a minute, which seemed an hour, the iron came out of the wound. Paré threw it from him, and then bent over the wound, from the inspection of which he rose, with a face full of joy. All understood that there was hope, and many wept aloud.

Then Paré said, gravely, "Now, I answer for the life of M. de Guise."

Indeed, within an hour the duke recovered consciousness and speech. Ambroise Paré was finishing bandaging the wound, and Gabriel was standing by the couch.

"Thus, Gabriel," said the duke, at last, "to you I owe, not only the taking of Calais, but my life, since you brought M. Paré to me."

"Yes, monseigneur," said Paré, "for they would not let me approach you."

"My two saviours," said the duke.

"Pray do not talk so much, monseigneur."

"I will not; but tell me one thing."

"What is it, monseigneur?"

"Will this horrible wound affect my health or my reason?"

"No, monseigneur, I can assure you, but I fear that there will remain a scar."

"Oh! that is nothing, I shall not much mind being called le Balafré."

We know that this was the title by which the duke was known to posterity.

CHAPTER LVII.

PARTIAL DENOUEMENT.

On the following day, the 8th of January, a family council was taking place in the house of Pierre Peuquoy around the bed of Martin Guerre, whose leg had been amputated by M. Paré, and who was now doing well.

To paint the remorse which Pierre experienced on learning the truth is impossible, and he was constantly beseeching Martin to accept all that he possessed. The honest armourer was, however, somewhat calmer than before, for, if Martin was married, the real cul-

prit might not be, and reparation might still be possible. Jean, on the contrary, was more sad, and Babette appeared much cast down.

Jean and Pierre had just returned from the duke, who had sent for them to thank them for the part they had taken in the siege. "Yes, sister," said Pierre, "after M. d'Exmès had, in terms far too flattering, explained to the Duc de Guise how we had contributed to this glorious result, this great man thanked us with a grace and a goodness which I shall never forget. But above all he rejoiced me by adding that he desired to be useful to us in his turn, and asking what he could do for us. Now, sister, as soon as I have found him who has so injured us, I will ask M. de Guise to assist us to force him to do you justice." Babette began to cry. "What is the matter, Babette?" continued he.

"I am very unhappy," sobbed she.

"But it seems to me that your prospects brighten."

"On the contrary, they grow darker."

"No, be easy; all will go well. Your lover will return to you—you will be his wife."

"But if I refuse to marry him?"

Jean Peuquoy made a movement of joy which did not escape Gabriel.

"Refuse him!" cried Pierre, in astonishment; "but you loved him."

"I loved," said Babette, "he who suffered, who seemed to love me, who showed me respect and tenderness. But he who deceived me, and lied to me—who abandoned me—I hate and despise."

"But if he married you?"

"He would marry me only because he was obliged to do so, or because he would hope for the protection of the duke. If he gave me his name, it would be either from fear or cupidity. I will have nothing to do with him."

"Babette," replied her brother, severely, "You have no longer the right to say, 'I will have nothing to do with him.'"

"My dear brother, have pity, and do not force me

to marry a man, whom you yourself call a miserable wretch."

"Babette, think of your reputation."

"I would rather have to blush for my faults than for my husband."

"Then, Babette, you will not attend to my wishes?"

"I implore your affection and your pity, brother."

"And I answer you with grief, but with firmness. It is necessary, above all things, that you should live esteemed by others, and by yourself. I prefer you unhappy, to dishonoured; and I, your brother and the head of your family, insist that you marry this man, and I will use my authority to force you to do so."

"You condemn me to death, brother," said Babette, "but I resign myself, as a punishment for my fault, since no one intercedes for me."

Jean, at this appeal, could restrain himself no longer—"Who should intercede for you," cried he, bitterly, "when what your brother asks is so just and wise. He thinks only of the honour of the family, and to save this, he wishes to make you marry an impostor. It is true that this wretch, once received into our family, will dishonour it; and it is certain that M. d'Exmès will not fail to demand from him a severe account, for the infamous manner in which he has persecuted Martin Guerre, and that you, as his wife, may be dragged into court as a witness, you may die of shame as a wife, but never mind, you will have done your duty."

"Jean," said Pierre, "I hardly recognise you, who are generally so calm and moderate."

"It is because I am so that I see better than you the consequences of this step."

"I know, Jean, that the situation is difficult, but it is not of my making. But have you, who object to it, a better plan?"

"Yes, doubtless."

"What is it?" cried Pierre and Babette, eagerly.

"It is," said Jean, "to find some honest man who,

more touched than frightened at Babette's misfortune, will consent to give her his name."

Pierre shook his head incredulouly, and said, "We cannot hope for that. Such a man must either be in love or act from base motives; and in any case we do not desire to spread our search among strangers."

Jean replied, with an emotion which he could not conceal, "Well, Pierre, if some one loved Babette—if he had learned at once her fault and her repentance, and was ready to forget the past in order to assure to himself a happy future—if this were so, what would you say, Pierre? What would you say, Babette?"

"Oh! that cannot be. It is a dream," said she.

"Do you know such a man, Jean?" asked Pierre; "or is it not, as Babette says, a dream?"

Jean looked earnestly at Babette, who stood with downcast eyes, then he said, "Alas! Pierre, I fear it is but a dream; for to realize it, it is necessary, not only that Babette should be loved, but that she should love a little, or else she would be still unhappy; for he that would thus wish to assure his happiness would probably be neither young, nor handsome, nor amiable enough to induce Babette to become his wife."

"Yes, it was a dream," replied Babette, sadly; "but not, my cousin, for the reasons you mention. The man generous enough to take compassion on me thus, were he the most morose and withered, would seem young to me, for his action would show a freshness of heart. I should find him handsome, for such sentiments must leave a noble stamp upon the countenance; and I should find him amiable, for he would have given me the greatest proof of love that a woman can receive. My duty and my joy would be to love him all my life, and with all my heart. But," she added, with a sigh, "it is impossible to find such a man as you have pictured, more especially for a poor girl without beauty. There might be some one generous enough to think of it,

and that is much; but on reflection he would doubt, and draw back. It is, indeed, only a dream."

"But what if it be true?" said Gabriel, rising.

"True! What do you mean?"

"I say, Babette, that this generous man exists. I know him, and he loves you deeply and truly, with an affection which loves to protect and to pardon. Thus you may, without hesitation, accept his offer, which is inspired by sincere pity and true devotion. Besides, you will give as much as you will receive, Babette; you will receive honour, but you will bestow happiness, for he who loves you is alone and isolated in the world—without joys and without interest—and you would bring him both, Babette. Is it not so, Jean?"

"But, M. le Vicomte," stammered Jean, "I do not know——"

"True, Jean; you do not know that Babette has for him who loves her a profound esteem and great tenderness. She has vaguely penetrated this love, with happiness and hope; and it is since this that she has conceived so violent an aversion for the wretch who deceived her. This is why she just now prayed her brother not to marry her to him, whom she thought she loved, when she only pitied him, and whom she now hates. Am I not right, Babette?"

"Really, monsieur, I do not know," said she, pale as death.

"What! are you both ignorant of your own sentiments? Is it I who am first to reveal to you, Babette, that Jean loves you; and to you, Jean, that you are loved by Babette?"

"Is it possible?" cried Pierre, joyfully.

Babette and Jean looked at each other for an instant; then, almost without knowing how, they were locked in each other's arms.

Pierre was too much overcome to utter a word, but he pressed Jean's hand with an eloquent grasp, while Martin Guerre clapped his hands joyfully.

CHAPTER LVIII.

HAPPY AUSPICES.

As Gabriel was to leave the same day for Paris, he went to take leave of the Duc de Guise. He was compelled to leave Martin behind, Ambroise Paré having declared that his recovery would be slow, and that he would require the greatest care.

"Here you are, my ambitious young friend," said the duke as he entered.

"All my ambition has been to second you to the best of my ability, monseigneur."

"Oh! I speak now of the exorbitant demands that you have recently addressed to me, and which I do not know how to satisfy. Just listen to them, M. de Vaudemont. Firstly, M. d'Exmès asks me to take with me to Paris, but meanwhile to employ them as I wish, the little troop of men that he enrolled for himself, these men being no other than the incarnate devils who scaled the fort of Risbank with him. Who do you think confers the favour here?"

"I must confess it to be M. d'Exmès," said M. de Vaudemont.

"And, ma foi, I accept this new obligation willingly, and I will not spoil them by idleness. As soon as I am able, I will lead them to Havre, for I do not intend to leave the English a foot of ground in France. The second demand of M. d'Exmès is that I should remember that Madame de Castro, the daughter of the king, is in this town, where she was brought a prisoner, and to extend my protection to her. I have already given instructions on this point; and, although I am a bad courtier, I am enough of a gentleman to be anxious to pay every respect to Madame de Castro, who will be conveyed to Paris whenever she pleases by a suitable escort."

Gabriel bowed his thanks, fearing to show by words the interest he took in this subject.

"Thirdly, Lord Wentworth being the prisoner of M. d'Exmès, we had agreed to admit him to ransom, but the vicomte prays us to send him free to England."

"But, monseigneur," said Gabriel, "will you permit me to remind you of the promise that you made to me in my tent, the night before the capture of Risbank?"

"Wait, impatient young man," said the duke. "After the three eminent services I have rendered to you, surely I have the right to ask one of you. I ask you, then, since you are going so soon to Paris, to take and present to the king the keys of Calais."

"Oh! monseigneur!" cried Gabriel, joyfully.

"That will not trouble you, I hope. Besides, you are used to this sort of commission. You took charge of the flags captured in our Italian campaign. You can also take to his majesty a copy of the terms of the capitulation, and this letter announcing our success, which I wrote this morning, in spite of M. Paré; but no one else could have rendered you full justice. I trust you will be content with me, and —afterwards with the king. Here are the keys and the letter."

"Monseigneur, I am yours for life or death," cried Gabriel.

He took the little box and the letter which the duke held out to him. They were precious talismans which might restore him to his father and to happiness.

"And now," said the duke, "I dare say you are impatient to set out; and I experience, I confess, a degree of fatigue which imperatively calls for some hours of repose."

"Adieu, then, and once more, many thanks, monseigneur."

At this moment a gentleman entered with an agitated look.

"What is the matter, M. de Phermés?" asked the duke.

"Monseigneur, Lord Wentworth, to whom, by your orders, I went to restore his sword, received the news coldly and without a word. I left him astonished, when a cry summoned me back. Lord Wentworth had passed through his body the sword I had just returned to him. He died immediately."

"It is the despair consequent upon his defeat which has driven him to it," cried the duke. "It is a real misfortune."

When Gabriel left the duke, he proceeded to the governor's house, where Diana still was. He had not seen her since the night before, but she had heard of the recovery of the duke, and he found her calm and resigned. She was rejoiced at the duke's letter and commissions, and they talked long over their hopes and prospects.

As it grew late and it was time for him to depart; "Go, then, Gabriel," said she; "go, that our lot may be quickly decided."

"Thanks for your courage, which sustains mine, dear Diana."

"Stay an instant, Gabriel; besides this letter from the duke, you shall also take one from me, which I have written to the king, telling him how you have delivered and saved me. Thus it will be clear to him and to all, that you have restored a city to France, and a daughter to her father. I speak thus, for I believe my instincts do not deceive me, and that he is really my father."

"May you speak truly, dear Diana!"

"I envy you, Gabriel, for you will be the first to know our destiny. However, I shall soon follow you, for, as M. de Guise is so kind, I shall ask leave to set off to-morrow morning, and although I shall travel more slowly, you will not be in Paris many days before me."

"Oh, yes! Diana, come quickly, your presence must bring me happiness."

"And as you are forced to leave behind you your faithful squire, I wish you to take with you the French page whom Lord Wentworth gave to me,

André is but seventeen, but he is devoted and loyal, and he will be to you, in some degree, a souvenir of me."

"Thanks, dear Diana, but I must set off at once."

"He will join you before you are out of Calais."

"I accept gladly, then; he will be some one to whom I can speak of you."

"So I thought," replied she, blushing, "but now we must say adieu."

"Oh, no! Let us rather say, au revoir."

"Alas! when and how shall we meet again? If the enigma of our fate be decided unhappily, it would be better to meet no more."

"Do not say so, Diana. Besides, who is to tell you, if not I?"

"Oh, mon Dieu! I could not bear to hear misfortune from your lips."

"What shall I do, then?"

Diana drew a ring from her finger; then she took from a chest the veil she had worn in the convent at St. Quentin, and then said solemnly, "As it is probable, Gabriel, that all will be decided before my return, send André to meet me on the road. If all is well, send by him this ring to the Comtesse de Montgomery; if not, let him give this veil to Sister Benie."

"Diana, you are an angel."

They exchanged a silent embrace—then Diana cried, "Au revoir, Gabriel, either in this world or the next."

"Au revoir," cried he, in a stifled voice, and he rushed hastily from the room. Half an hour afterwards he was on his road, accompanied by André and four other men. He had hope, for all seemed now favourable to him. He had done a great deal, and he still seemed to hear Diana's soft voice whispering hope and encouragement in his ear—her ring was on his finger, and the blue sky and bright sun all seemed to speak of hope; and he hoped.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE VICOMTE DE MONTGOMERY.

On the 12th of January, 1558, there was a brilliant assemblage of nobles and ladies at the Louvre. Nevertheless, the king was absent and unquiet, for he was most anxious about the result of the expedition to Calais, and had often blamed himself for having allowed the duke to undertake it. Suddenly an usher entered, and, bowing before the king, announced loudly that an officer, sent by M. de Guise from Calais, requested the favour of an interview with his majesty.

"From Calais!" cried the king, joyfully; "let him enter immediately."

We need scarcely say that every voice was hushed, and that all looked anxiously towards the door. In the midst of this silence Gabriel entered, followed by his four men bearing the English flags. Gabriel himself carried the keys of Calais and the two letters on a velvet cushion. At this sight, the face of Henry the Second expressed a mixture of joy and terror. He comprehended the happy message, but he feared the messenger.

"Vicomte d'Exmès!" murmured he.

The constable and Diana de Poitiers exchanged a glance of alarm; however, Gabriel, solemn and firm, advanced, and, kneeling before the king, said, "Sire, I present to you the keys of Calais, which, after a siege of seven days and three desperate assaults, was surrendered by the English to M. de Guise, and which his grace hastens to present to your majesty."

"Calais is ours?" asked the king.

"Yes, sire."

"Vive le roi!" cried all the company.

Henri, who forgot all but these marvellous triumphs of his arms, looked round with a radiant countenance.

"Thanks, gentlemen, thanks," said he; "I accept, in the name of France, these acclamations, but they should not be addressed to me alone—it is only just that the best part be bestowed on the valiant chief of the enterprise—M. de Guise."

Murmurs of approbation welcomed this speech.

"And in the absence of our dear cousin," continued the king, "we are happy to be able to offer our felicitations to you, his brother, M. le Cardinal de Lorraine, and to you, M. d'Exmès, whom he has charged with this glorious announcement."

"Sire," said Gabriel respectfully but boldly, "excuse me, but I am no longer the Vicomte d'Exmès."

"How?" cried Henri, frowning.

"Sire, since the taking of Calais, I thought I might assume my true name—the Vicomte de Montgomery."

The sound of this name, which had not been heard in that assembly for so long a time, occasioned a universal exclamation of surprise. And as this young man called himself the Vicomte de Montgomery, the Comte de Montgomery must be still alive. What could it mean?

The king turned white, and his lips trembled with anger and impatience. "What does this mean, monsieur, and whence comes this boldness?"

"It is my true name, sire; and what your majesty calls boldness, is only confidence."

"Your private affairs can come later, monsieur; but it seems to me that you have not fulfilled your mission."

"It is true, sire, I have to present to your majesty these flags taken from the English, and this letter written by M. de Guise himself."

The king took the letter, broke the seals, and, turning to the cardinal, said, "You, M. de Lorraine, shall have the pleasure of reading aloud this letter from your brother."

Charles de Lorraine bowed, thanked the king, and read—

"Sire, Calais is ours; we have retaken in a week a city that cost the English a year's siege, two hundred years ago. Guines and Ham, the last two places which they possess in France, cannot now hold out long, and I can promise your majesty that very shortly our hereditary enemies will be driven out of your kingdom. I have thought it best to be generous to the vanquished, and have permitted all who wished it to retire to England, as it might have been dangerous to leave in a city so recently taken so large an element of revolt. Owing to the rapidity with which the place was taken, the number of our own killed and wounded is not large. However, time and leisure fail me to give details. Wounded seriously myself——"

The cardinal stopped and turned pale.

"What! the duke wounded?" cried the king.

"Your majesty and your eminence may reassure yourselves. The wound of M. de Guise will have no bad consequences, thank God. Little now remains except a scar in the face and the name of Le Balafré."

The cardinal read on—"Wounded seriously myself the day of our entrance into Calais, I have been saved by the prompt assistance and great skill of a young surgeon, called Ambroise Paré, but I am still weak. Your majesty may learn all details from him who will bring you this letter, together with the keys of Calais and the English flags, and of whom, before I finish, I must speak, for it is not to me, sire, that all the honour of taking Calais belongs. I contributed with all my power and with my valiant troops, but the first idea, and ultimate success, belong wholly to M. d'Exmès. I confess I had never even thought of this bold attempt until it was proposed to me by him, who combated all my doubts and overcame my hesitation.

"But this is not all—M. d'Exmès furnished Marshal Strozzi with the means of entering Calais in

disguise, and of examining the means of attack and defence; he also gave us an exact plan of the ramparts and fortifications of Calais, so that we knew them as though the walls were made of glass. Under the walls and in the assaults—at the fort of St. Agatha and before that of Nieullay—everywhere M. d'Exmès performed prodigies of valour at the head of his little troop, raised entirely at his own expense. But after the taking of Nieullay we should still have been ruined by the fort of Risbank, which, guarding the sea, would have held us at bay until succours had arrived from England; our gigantic attempt would have failed at this point, and yet, how, without ships, were we to take a fort which could be approached only from the sea?

"It was here, sire, that M. d'Exmès performed a miracle. After a perilous night, in a frail bark, with only his own volunteers, he gained the foot of the fort, and then, aided by communications which he had established in the city, he, by a frightful escalade, planted the French flag on that formidable tower——"

At this point, in spite of the presence of the king, a cry of admiration, that nothing could repress, broke from the assembly. The appearance of Gabriel, beautiful, firm, and yet modest, added not a little to the impression made by the recital of this exploit. The king himself was moved, and looked with a softened eye on the young hero. Only Madame de Poitiers bit her lips, and M. de Montmorency frowned.

The cardinal continued—"After the surprise of Risbank, the town was ours. The English vessels did not even dare to approach, and three days afterwards we entered Calais, seconded again by the friends of M. d'Exmès, and by his own vigorous sortie. It was in the last struggle that I received this terrible wound, which would have cost me my life, had not M. d'Exmès, almost by force, brought

to my death-bed M. Paré, the surgeon who saved me——"

"Oh! monsieur, in my turn I thank you," said the cardinal. Then he went on with the letter,

"Sire, generally, the glory of these great enterprises is attributed solely to the commander. M. d'Exmès is modest as great, and would willingly let his name be eclipsed by mine; nevertheless, it is but justice in me to acknowledge that without him Calais would still be in the hands of the English. The rest belongs to you, sire, and I envy you, for it appears, from what M. d'Exmès says, you have it in your power to confer upon him a worthy recompense.

"I pray God to give your majesty a long and happy reign, and am, your majesty's obedient, humble servant and subject,

"François de Lorraine."

When the cardinal had finished, the signs of applause were repeated. The king felt the general desire, and, giving way to it, said, "Well, monsieur, you have done great things, and I trust that, as M. de Guise says, I have it in my power to recompense you in a fitting manner."

"Sire," said Gabriel, "I desire but one thing, and your majesty knows what that is—but pardon, my mission is not yet completed."

"What is there more, then?"

"Sire, a letter from Madame de Castro."

"From Madame de Castro?" said the king, taking it with eager gladness.

The groups around dispersed, at a word from the king, to talk over the news, and Henri was soon intently reading his letter. "Dear Diana—poor Diana," murmured he. When he had finished, carried away by natural and generous feelings, he turned to Gabriel and said, "Madame de Castro also recommends to me her liberator; she says that you have not only restored her to liberty, but saved her honour."

"I did my duty, sire."

"Then it is now my turn to do mine. Tell me what you ask, M. le Vicomte de Montgomery."

CHAPTER LX.

JOY AND ANGUISH.

M. le Vicomte de Montgomery. At this name, which, pronounced by the king, contained in itself a promise, Gabriel trembled with pleasure. Henri was evidently going to pardon him.

"He is giving way," said Madame de Poitiers to the constable.

"Let us wait for our turn," replied he.

"Sire," said Gabriel, "I have no need to repeat to your majesty the favour I ask from your goodness and justice. What your majesty exacted, I have performed; will your majesty now grant my prayer? will you keep your promise to me?"

"Yes, monsieur, on condition of your promised silence."

"This, sire, I once more pledge my honour to preserve scrupulously."

"Approach then, monsieur."

Gabriel took a step forward, but Madame de Poitiers remained near enough to hear all that passed, although the king spoke low. This surveillance, however, did not seem to make the king waver, for he said, firmly,—

"M. le Vicomte de Montgomery, you are a valiant man, whom I esteem and honour; when you shall have obtained what you ask, and which you have so well earned, we shall not certainly have sufficiently recompensed you; however, take this ring, and tomorrow morning, at eight o'clock, present it to the Governor of the Châtelet. He shall be apprised before that time, and will be ready to deliver up to you the object of your holy and worthy ambition."

Gabriel fell at the feet of the king, and cried, with his eyes full of tears, "Ah! sire, all the energy and determination which I possess, and of which I have, perhaps, given some proofs, are for the rest of my life devoted to your majesty, as they would have been, I confess, instruments of my hatred if you had refused my prayer."

"Really," said the king, smiling.

"Yes, sire, I confess that I should have extended my vengeance even to your majesty's children, as now I will defend and love you and them. Before God, who sooner or later punishes those who break their oaths, I will keep my oath of fidelity, as I would have done that of vengeance."

"Rise," said the king, still smiling, "calm yourself, and recount to me the particulars of the siege of Calais."

Henri kept Gabriel for more than an hour, talking to him on this subject. Then the cardinal, who knew little of Gabriel's antecedents, would absolutely present him to the queen, but meanwhile he saw with terror, that Diana de Poitiers had approached the king, and was speaking in a low voice with her wicked smile. She seemed to be insisting on something, against which he appeared to be remonstrating. She then called the constable, who also talked earnestly to the king. Gabriel saw all this from a distance, and suffered a martyrdom; but while he was thus tormented, he was gaily accosted by the Queen Dauphine, Marie Stuart, who overwhelmed him with compliments and questions.

Gabriel, in spite of his disquietude, replied with as much composure as possible,—

"It is magnificent!" cried Marie, enthusiastically; "is it not true, François?" said she, addressing her young husband, who readily joined his praises to those of his wife.

"To merit so much kindness, what would one not do?" said Gabriel, whose eyes still sought the group round the king.

"When I felt myself attracted to you, by I know

not what sympathy," continued Marie Stuart, with her accustomed grace, "my heart warned me, doubtless, that you would furnish this glorious triumph to the fame of my dear uncle. Would that I had, like the king, the power of recompensing you. But all that I have just now to give is this little bouquet of violets, which the gardener, des Tournelles, sent to me this morning, as a rarity, after the late frosts. Flowers are generally offered as a token of joy, or as a consolation to the unhappy—to you, happy and triumphant, I offer them as a tribute. Will you accept them?"

"Oh! madam," said he, kissing her hand, "I accept them gladly, but," he added with a sigh, "who knows that the triumphant conqueror may not soon need consolation?" for he had remarked that the king spoke no longer, but only listened. When the young queen left him, Admiral Coligny accosted him in his turn, with felicitations on the brilliant manner in which he had acted at Calais.

"I only trust," added he, "that we may never meet as enemies."

"I trust not; but what do you mean?"

"Why, they have burnt alive four of our party," said Coligny, "and the reformed, who every day grow in number and in power, will soon be wearied of these odious persecutions, and then the two parties may form two armies."

"Well?"

"Well, M. d'Exmès, in spite of our promenade together in the Rue St. Jacques, you kept your liberty, and engaged yourself to nothing, and I fear you are now too much in favour not to join the king againts the heretics, as they call us."

"I believe you are wrong," answered Gabriel, in a whisper, whose eyes still sought the king. "I fear, on the contrary, that I may soon have the right to march with the oppressed against the oppressors."

"What do you mean, Gabriel?—what is the matter? You turn pale—you seem troubled."

"Nothing, admiral, but I must leave you; I will see you again soon."

Gabriel had just seen a sign of acquiescence from the king, and looks of triumph on the faces of Madame de Poitiers and M. de Montmorency. Nevertheless, when, some minutes after, the reception was over, and Gabriel went to take leave of the king, he said, "Sire, till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow, monsieur," answered the king, but he turned away his head and smiled no more.

Gabriel retired with terror in his heart. All the evening he wandered round the Châtelet, and regained courage a little by not seeing M. de Montmorency come out. Then he recalled the king's clear promise—"The object of your holy and worthy ambition shall be given to you,"—and he hoped again.

CHAPTER LXI.

PRECAUTIONS.

What Gabriel thought and suffered during those hours God only knows, for on returning to his own house he did not even speak of it to his nurse, and from that moment he began that concentrated and silent life, rife in action but sparing in words, which he rigidly continued ever after. Thus faded hopes, energetic resolutions, projects of love and of vengeance—all that in that night of suspense Gabriel had felt and sworn to himself—all remained a profound secret between himself and his own heart.

At eight o'clock he was to present himself at the Châtelet with the ring which was to open the doors to himself and to his father. At six o'clock he came down equipped for a long journey, having collected all the gold in his house; he then called André, his page, and said to him—

"André, I have some grave commissions to exe-

cute which I must entrust to you, who replace to me my faithful squire—Martin Guerre."

"I am at your orders, monsieur."

"Then listen attentively. In an hour I shall leave this house, alone: if I return soon you will have nothing to do, or rather, I will give you fresh orders. But it is possible that I may not return to-day, nor yet to-morrow—perhaps not for a long time."

"Pardon, monsieur, but do you mean that I shall not see you for a long time?"

"It is possible."

"Because Madame de Castro, before my departure, gave me a letter for you, monsieur."

"And you never gave it to me!"

"I was only to give it to you, monsieur, on your return from the Louvre, in case you were either very sad or very angry."

"Give it me immediately," cried Gabriel.

André gave it to his master, who retired to the window to read it. It was as follows:—

"GABRIEL,—Amidst the anguish of this last night, which may perhaps separate me from you for ever, the most cruel thought which tears my heart is that you may, in the fulfilment of the great duty which you have to perform, find yourself brought into conflict with the king. It may be that the crime forces you on to punish him,—but, Gabriel, though I do not yet know whether he is my father, still I know that he has cherished me as his child, and the idea of your vengeance makes me tremble, the accomplishment of it would kill me. And yet, perhaps, my duty as a child may constrain me to think like you—perhaps I may feel that I ought to avenge the injuries of him who is really my father against him who has acted like one. But while this point is yet doubtful—while I am still ignorant where my love or my hatred is due, I conjure you, Gabriel—and if you have ever loved me you will obey me—to respect the person of the king.

"I reason now, if not without emotion, at least

without passion, and I feel that it is not for men to take vengeance on their fellow-creatures, but that they should rather leave it to God. I pray you, then, my friend, whatever happens, to leave it to Him to punish the criminal. Believe me, He will avenge you more terribly than you can avenge yourself; and, unless He makes you his involuntary instrument—unless He uses, in spite of yourself, your hand to deal the blow, do not take the execution of his sentence upon yourself. I ask this, my friend, for my sake. Mercy is the last cry and the last prayer that you may ever receive from your

"DIANA DE CASTRO."

Gabriel read this letter without any outward marks of emotion, beyond the sad smile which had become habitual to him. Then he said,—

"This letter does not alter what I had to say to you, André; and, therefore, if I do not return soon, and you hear nothing of me, this is what you must do. Madame de Castro will be in Paris in a few days; make inquiries, so that you may know of her arrival immediately; endeavour, if possible, to see her, and give her from me this packet, and tell her——"

"What, monsieur?" asked André, seeing that his master hesitated.

"Tell her only that I give her back all her promises, even that of which this veil is the pledge. Ask her to take you back into her service, that is, if you wish it; if not, come back here, and await my return."

"Then you will really return?" cried Aloyse, with tears in her eyes. "You said, that perhaps we might see you no more."

"That would, perhaps, be the best, good nurse; but wait quietly, and hope——"

"Hope! That will be difficult when you have disappeared."

"But I may not disappear. And, although I have taken precautions, I hope soon to embrace you again. I commenced by telling André that all my instructions were needless if I returned."

"God grant that you may. But have you no other instructions to leave?"

"Stay—yes, I have;" and he sat down, and wrote the following note:—

"DEAR ADMIRAL,

"I am going to be instructed in your religion, and you may count on me from to-day as one of you. Whatever be the motive which determines me, I have not the less vowed to you my heart, my sword, and my life.

"Your friend and companion,
"GABRIEL DE MONTGOMERY."

"Send this note also if I do not return; and now, my friends, I must leave you."

Half an hour afterwards, Gabriel, with a trembling hand, knocked at the door of the châtelet.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE SECRET PRISONER.

M. DE SALVOISIN, who had received Gabriel on his first visit, was dead, and the new governor was called M. Sageran.

When Gabriel was presented to him, his emotion was so great, that he could not utter a word, but presented the ring to him in silence.

M. de Sageran bowed gravely, and said, "I expected you, monsieur; an hour ago I received an order at the sight of this ring, to deliver to you the nameless prisoner, who has been confined here for so many years, and known only as No. 21. Is that right, monsieur?"

"Yes, yes! monsieur. And this order——?"

"I am ready to obey," replied the governor, in a tone in which a more indifferent person might have discovered a shade of sadness

"Ah! it is true, then," he cried, "and my terrors were all foolish. Let us go quickly, I pray, monsieur."

Gabriel attempted to follow the governor, but his strong limbs almost failed him, at the almost unexpected realisation of so many efforts and hopes, and he turned faint. "Pardon, monsieur," said he, to the governor, "but joy is sometimes difficult to bear."

"Pray do not apologise, monsieur," replied the governor.

Gabriel, struck this time by his sorrowful voice, raised his eyes, and looked at him. It was impossible to see a more benevolent face, or one more open and honest; yet, strange to say, the expression it bore at that moment, while he contemplated Gabriel's overflowing joy, was one of compassion. Gabriel saw this, and struck by a sudden presentiment, turned pale; but, endeavouring to throw it off, he said, "Let us proceed, monsieur; I am ready."

They descended into the prisons, preceded by a gaoler, bearing a torch. Gabriel recognised at each step the sombre corridors and staircases which he had before traversed. When they arrived at the door of the cell where he had seen the prisoner, he stopped, and said, "It is there." But M. de Sageran shook his head sadly, and said,—

"No, it is not there."

"How! not there?"

"No, monsieur."

"What do you mean?"

"Since last night, monsieur, I grieve to have to tell you, that the prisoner in question has been transferred to a lower cell."

"Ah!" cried Gabriel, in terror; "and why so?"

"He had been warned—you know, perhaps, monsieur, that if he uttered the least word or sound, he should immediately be transferred to a still lower cell, more dreadful and unwholesome than the one he was in. Once already he had disobeyed this order, and it was then that he was thrown into this cell, which is horrible enough."

"Well, monsieur!" cried Gabriel, impatiently.

"Last evening a man came here—a powerful person—whose name I dare not disclose."

"It does not matter."

"This person ordered me to introduce him into this cell. I accompanied him. He spoke to the prisoner several times without obtaining an answer, and I hoped that the old man would have come victoriously out of this trial; for during half an hour he kept silence, in spite of all provocations and entreaties. Unhappily, at last, at something that was said to him, the prisoner sat up, tears gushed from his eyes, and he spoke.

"And then?" asked Gabriel, in a broken voice.

"Then I was immediately required, in spite of my prayers and representations, to accomplish the barbarous sentence which had been imposed upon him; to obey an authority superior to my own, and which, had I refused, would easily have found more docile agents, and to have him removed to the cell below this."

"Oh! let us run then quickly, for I bring deliverance."

The governor shook his head sadly, but Gabriel had already begun to descend. M. de Sageran took the torch from the hand of his attendant and followed him. As they descended the air became more and more suffocating, and when they reached the bottom of the staircase, they could hardly breathe, and any one might have known that the only things which could live in such an atmosphere were the reptiles which crawled under their feet. But Gabriel did not think of all this; he took the key from the trembling hand of the governor, and, opening the heavy mouldy door, rushed into the cell. By the light of the torch he saw in a corner, on a bed of straw, a body extended; he rushed towards it, crying, "My father."

M. de Sageran trembled at this cry, for the arms and head of the old man fell powerless under the hands of Gabriel.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE COMTE DE MONTGOMERY.

GABRIEL, still on his knees, looked around him in a kind of bewilderment. Then he placed his hand on the old man's heart.

"No," said he, after a moment's pause, in a voice terribly calm, "there is no movement—the heart beats no longer, but he is still warm."

"What a vigorous nature," murmured the governor; "he might have lived a long time yet."

Gabriel stooped and closed the eyes of the dead man, then for the first and last time kissed the poor withered eyelids which had been moistened by so many tears.

"Monsieur," said the governor, who wished to distract his attention, "if the deceased was dear to you I am permitted to let you carry him away."

"Ah! truly," said Gabriel, with the same frightful calmness; "they are very just and keep their promises strictly. They had sworn to restore to me my father, but I confess that they did not swear to restore him alive." And he laughed loudly.

"Courage, monsieur," said the governor; "it is now time to say adieu to him whom you mourn. The air here is not fit for living people, and a longer stay among these miasmas might prove dangerous."

"Here is the proof," said Gabriel, pointing to the body.

"Come, then," said M. de Sageran, trying to lead the young man away.

"Yes; I will follow you; give me only one minute more."

The governor went towards the door where the air was a little better, and Gabriel kneeled down by his father's body. What then passed through his mind

it is impossible to tell, but after some minutes the governor said—

"Monsieur, I pray you to come away; it is quite time."

"I am ready, monsieur." Then he kissed his father's hand once more and ascended the stairs.

"Can I do anything more for you?" asked M. de Sageran, when they reached the top.

"Monsieur, you told me that I should be permitted to have my father buried. This evening men sent by me will come here, and if you will beforehand have the body placed in a shroud, they will take it to the family tomb of the prisoner."

"Yes, monsieur; but I must warn you that there is one condition annexed to this permission?"

"What is it?"

"That of keeping, according to some promise given, perfect silence on the subject, and of doing it secretly."

"I will do so. The men will come at night, without knowing whom they are to fetch, and shall transport the body to the family caves of the Counts of——"

"Pardon, monsieur, but I did not know the name of the prisoner while he lived, and there is no reason why I should hear it now."

"But I have nothing to hide: it is only the guilty who need concealment. However, monsieur, what you hid from me I can guess; for instance, the name of the man who visited the prisoner, and even the means which he used to make him speak."

"What! you know——"

"Yes, doubtless he said to the old man, 'your son lives,' or else 'your son has just gained a great victory,' or, perhaps, (the wretch!) 'your son is coming to deliver you.'"

The governor allowed a movement of surprise to escape him.

"And at the name of his son," continued Gabriel, "the unhappy father, who had restrained himself so well before a mortal enemy, was unable to control the impulse of his joy, and, dumb against hate, cried out through love."

The governor did not reply. "It is true, since you do not deny it," pursued Gabriel; "and as to this man's name, it is the Duc de Montmorency; I know the murderer."

"Oh! monsieur."

"And as for my name and that of my father, there is no reason why I should conceal it from you. I am, since the death of my father, the Comte de Montgomery. Adieu, monsieur, and thanks for your kindness."

He saluted M. de Sageran, and left the châtelet. Then, choosing a rather deserted spot, he wrote on his tablets this note:—"My good Aloyse, do not expect me, I shall not return to-day; I have need of solitude, but be not anxious about me, for I shall surely return. This evening take care that every one retires early. Watch alone, and open the door to four men, who will come some time during the night; conduct them and their sad but precious burden to the family vault, and show them a tomb in which to place the body. When all is finished, give each of them four gold crowns and dismiss them; you may stay and pray beside the tomb, as by that of your master; I also shall pray at the same time, but at a distance. It must be so, for I feel that the sight of this tomb would lead me to extreme and violent measures. I must take counsel of solitude and of God. Au revoir! my good Aloyse. Recall to André his mission to Madame de Castro. May God keep you!

"GABRIEL DE M."

This letter finished, Gabriel sought out four workmen, to each of whom he gave four crowns in advance, and promised them as much more, to gain which they were first to carry a letter to its address, and then to present themselves at ten o'clock at the châtelet, where they would receive from the hands of the governor a body which they were to carry to the same place as the letter.

CHAPTER LXIV.

GABRIEL'S WANDERINGS.

ANDRE set off as desired to execute his mission to Madame de Castro, and met her at Amiens. On seeing him, she turned deadly pale, but rallying herself, she said, "What do you bring me, André?"

"Nothing but this, madam," said he, handing her the packet containing the veil.

"Oh! it is not the ring," cried she. Then after a moment, she said, "But have you no message—no letter?"

"Only, madam, that M. d'Exmès said, 'that he restored you all your promises, even that of which this veil was a pledge.'"

"But you gave him my letter. What did he say after reading it? André, tell me everything."

"I will tell you all I can, madam, but that is not much." He then recounted to her all that Gabriel had said and done since his return, but there was nothing in it to enlighten poor Diana. She looked sadly at the black veil—the messenger and the symbol of her fate.

"Either," thought she, "Gabriel knows he is my brother, or he has lost all hope of discovering this fatal secret. I have but to choose between two misfortunes. Ah! if he had but told me all! for this doubt is worse than certainty. What shall I do? Shall I return at once and enter some convent, never to leave it again, or is it not rather my duty to return to the court to seek Gabriel, and endeavour to draw the truth from him, and to watch over the perhaps menaced life of the king, my father. My father! but is Henry the Second my father? Should I not perhaps be protecting the murderer of my father?"

But Diana was a tender and generous woman, and she said to herself, that she might perhaps repent of

anger, but never of pardon; so giving way to her natural goodness, she determined to return to Paris, and, until she should have some certain news of Gabriel's intentions, to remain near the king as a safeguard and protection to him. Gabriel himself, even, might have need of her intercession, and when she had saved those she loved from each other, it would be time enough to take refuge in a convent.

Three days afterwards, therefore, she arrived at the Louvre, where Henri welcomed her with a fatherly joy and tenderness; but in spite of herself, she could not but receive his demonstrations with coldness, and the king, on his part, could not help feeling embarrassed in her presence. He did not dare to speak to her again of the proposed marriage with François de Montmorency, and on this point, therefore, she was tranquil. But of Gabriel she had no news; he seemed to have disappeared, although some people thought they had met him wandering about, looking sombre and gloomy.

This was true; he had been met in various places, for, haunted by a terrible souvenir and still more terrible thought, he could not rest, but constantly wandered from place to place, like Orestes pursued by the Furies, and never entered a house, except from absolute necessity. Once, however, M. Paré, who had returned to Paris, saw his old acquaintance, the Vicomte d'Exmès, enter his room and sit down. Then, like a man who had come from a distant country, he questioned him about things, of which no one was ignorant; for, after inquiring about Martin Guerre and his progress, he asked about the Duc de Guise and the army.

All had gone well there, and there no longer remained to the English, as the duke had promised, a rood of land in France. Gabriel thanked him coldly for his information, said he was glad to hear that the siege of Calais had been useful, but added,—

"It was not, however, to ask this that I came to you; but I have never forgotten your words which moved me so much under that humble roof in the

Rue St. Jacques. You have now definitively joined the reformed religion?"

"Yes, monsieur; my correspondence with Calvin completely dissipated my few remaining doubts, and I am now thoroughly convinced."

"Well, monsieur, will you instruct a neophyte, who is anxious to learn? I speak of myself."

"Willingly, M. d'Exmès."

They conversed for many hours; Paré, ardent and eloquent; Gabriel, sad and docile. At last he rose and pressed the surgeon's hand—"Thanks," said he; "this conversation has done me great good. The time has not yet come when I can openly join your ranks; but I am now convinced that yours is the right path, and we shall meet again."

In the beginning of the following month, May, 1588, Gabriel reappeared in his own house; to which Martin Guerre had returned about a fortnight. Aloyse received him with delight, and would have questioned him as to what had become of him, and what his plans now were, but Gabriel imposed silence upon her. He remained with them all day; but towards evening he rose, and said, "Now I must leave you." Then turning towards Martin,—"My brave Martin," said he, "I have been occupying myself about you in my travels, and, unknown myself, I have made inquiries, and believe I have found traces of the wretch who has imposed upon us both."

"Oh! monsieur."

"Yes, I believe I am now on the right track; but you must help me. Set off next week for your own home, but do not go there direct; be at Lyons a month from to-day; I will join you there, and we will act in concert."

"I will obey, monsieur; but shall I not join you earlier?"

"No, I must be alone now. Adieu, my good friends; and remember, Martin, a month hence at Lyons."

CHAPTER LXV.

WHERE WE MEET AGAIN ARNOLD DU THILL.

Six weeks after, on the 15th of June, in the village of Artigues, near Rieux, a man, who to judge by his boots, must have walked a long way, was sitting on a wooden bench, holding out his feet to a woman who was unlacing his boots.

"Have you nearly finished, Bertrande?" cried he; "you are so slow and awkward that you put me out of all patience."

"I have done, Martin," replied she, gently.

"Oh!" grumbled the pretended Martin, "where are my other shoes? I dare say you never thought of bringing them with you, and I must sit here with bare feet while you fetch them."

Bertrande ran into the house, and quickly returned with them. She had been marvellously softened down, and brought to submission.

"And my glass of wine—where is it?" asked he.

"It is ready, husband, and I will fetch it."

"Always to wait," cried he, impatiently. "Be quick! or else——" and an expressive movement of his stick finished the speech.

He drank it off, and then seemed rather better tempered. "You are very warm," said she.

"Well," replied Arnold, "I have been running about, according to the stupid fashion of this country, to invite all the neighbours on our wedding-day. I had really forgotten it, until you reminded me of it, yesterday."

"Yes, Martin, it is troublesome; but it is the custom, and one must conform to it."

"And have you done your part? is the table ready?"

"Yes, Martin."

"And did you go to the judge?"

"Yes, Martin, and he will come if he can."

"If he can! He must come; you have managed it badly; you knew I was anxious to have him here, but you do not care to please me. His presence would be the only thing to console me for the useless fuss of this ridiculous anniversary."

"Ridiculous anniversary! our wedding-day!" cried Bertrande, with tears in her eyes. "Ah! Martin, you have travelled a great deal, and learned many things, and you may despise the old ways of the country; but this anniversary recalls to me a time, when you were less severe, and more tender to your poor wife."

"Yes," said Arnold, with a sardonic laugh, "and when my wife was less sweet and gentle to me; when she forgot herself sometimes, even so far as to——"

"Oh! Martin, do not recall these things, which make me blush, and which now I can hardly understand."

"And I, when I think that I was fool enough to bear it. But never mind, my character has changed since that time, and yours also, I confess. Thus, now all goes smoothly."

"That is true, thank God."

"Now, Bertrande, return at once to the judge, and if you do not extract a promise from him to come, I shall hold you responsible."

Bertrande went, and Arnold's eyes followed her with a satisfied look. As he sat there, a man leaning on a stick, and seeming to walk with difficulty, came up to him, and said, "Pardon me, but is there in this village, I pray you, any inn where I may rest and refresh myself?"

"No, indeed, you must go to Rieux for that, two leagues off."

"Two leagues more! and I am dropping with fatigue: I would give a pistole with pleasure for a dinner and a bed."

"A pistole!" cried Arnold, always eager for money; "well, my good man, I can, if you wish it, give you a bed in a corner, and as to the dinner, we keep an

anniversary to-day, at which an additional guest would not matter. Will that suit you?"

"Oh! yes; for I am ready to drop with hunger and fatigue."

"Well, then, it is settled; for a pistole you said."

"Here it is in advance."

As Arnold rose to take it, he for the first time removed his large hat, when the stranger suddenly called out in surprise, "My nephew, Arnold du Thill!"

Arnold turned pale, but said, "I do not know you; who are you?"

"You do not recognise me, Arnold? Your old uncle, Carbon Barreau, to whom you have given so much trouble, as, indeed, you have to all your family?"

"Ma foi, no."

"What! you deny me, and yourself. You did not make your mother—my poor sister—die of grief when you abandoned her, a helpless widow, ten years ago, at Sagias? Ah! I know you well."

"I do not know what you are talking of," replied Arnold, impudently; "I am not called Arnold, but Martin Guerre; and I am not from Sagias, but from Artigues. All the people here will testify it. Ask my wife and my relations."

"Your wife and your relations? Can I be mistaken—such a resemblance!"

"After ten years it is difficult to remember; but you will soon see my real uncles and relations."

"Well, you are wonderfully like him; it is no compliment, however, for he was the greatest rogue possible. I dare say he is hanged by this time. Ah! I am glad I have no children who might, like him, have desolated my life and dishonoured my name."

"Oh!" thought Arnold, "it is true; my uncle Carbon had no children—no heirs." Then he said, aloud, "Nevertheless, you might be glad to have a son now, or even, failing that, your rogue of a nephew, who would at all events be one of your family to whom you might leave your money."

"My money?"

"Certainly; you, who give pistoles so readily, cannot be poor. Pardieu, I am sorry I am not your nephew."

"Yes, Arnold, if he be not hanged, will be my heir; but he will not get much by it, for, in spite of my offering a pistole when I am tired, my purse is very light."

"Hum!" said Arnold, incredulously.

"You do not believe me; but it is not the less true that I am going to Lyons, where M. le Maire has offered me an asylum and bread for the rest of my life. He sent me twenty-five pistoles to pay my little debts and my travelling expenses—the generous man."

"There, that will do," interrupted Arnold, rudely; "I have no time to listen to your chattering. Give me your pistole—you shall dine and sleep, and we shall be quits."

"It was you who questioned me," answered the old man, as he followed Arnold into the house.

The guests began to arrive, and the judge, whom Arnold wished so much to conciliate, occupied the place of honour. Carbon Barreau had many proofs that his host was called Martin Guerre.

"Do you remember, Martin Guerre," said one, "the Augustine monk, Father Chrysostom, who taught us both?"

"I recollect him perfectly," replied Arnold.

"Since you have so good a memory, perhaps you can remember me?" cried a voice from behind the guests.

CHAPTER LXVI.

JUSTICE EMBARRASSED.

He who spoke thus, in an imperious tone, threw off his brown cloak and large hat, and the guests, who had all turned round, saw a young and handsome cavalier, richly dressed.

"M. le Vicomte d'Exmès!" cried Arnold, turning as pale as death.

"Ah! you recognise me!"

Arnold, after a moment's hesitation, had calculated his chances, and taken his part. "Doubtless," said he, "I recognise M. le Vicomte d'Exmès from having seen him at the Louvre and elsewhere; but I wonder that he should recognise me, an obscure squire of the Constable Montmorency."

"You forget that you have also been mine."

"I! Monsieur is making a mistake."

"I am so certain I am right, that I require the judge of Artigues, now present, to arrest you on the spot."

All looked terrified, save Arnold himself, who preserved his composure. "May I know of what crime I am accused?" said he.

"I accuse you of having wickedly passed yourself off for my squire, Martin Guerre — of having stolen from him his name, his honour, and his wife, by means of your wonderful resemblance to him."

At this accusation all the guests looked at each other in stupid amazement. "What can it mean?" they cried. "Martin Guerre, not Martin Guerre!"

Arnold turned towards her whom he called his wife, and said, "Bertrande, speak; am I your husband, or not?"

She had hitherto sat, with a bewildered look, but at the sound of his voice she threw herself into his arms, and cried out, "Dear Martin Guerre!"

This impressed every one, and murmurs began to arise against the Vicomte d'Exmès.

"Monsieur," said Arnold, "against this testimony of my wife, and all my relations here present, do you still persist?"

"Yes, I persist in my accusation."

"One moment," cried Carbon Barreau. "I knew I could not be wrong; and I now affirm that this man is the image of my nephew Arnold du Thill, a native of Sagias, like myself."

"Ah! here is a providential support," said Gabriel. "Do you, monsieur, recognise your nephew in this man?"

"I cannot say whether it be him or the other one, but I am sure that if there be an imposture, it is on my nephew's side, for he is so clever at it."

"You hear, M. le Juge?"

"But where is the man who pretends I have wronged him? Why does he not appear, and confront me?"

"Martin Guerre, my squire, is, according to my desire, a prisoner at Rieux. M. le Juge, I am the Comte de Montgomery, formerly captain in his Majesty's Guards. The accused himself recognised me. I require you to arrest and imprison this man like his accuser. When they shall both be in the hands of justice, I trust to be able easily to show on which side is the imposture."

"Let it be so. Martin Guerre, I arrest you."

"I will not give in," cried Arnold, "sure as I am of my innocence. My dear friends, I may count on your testimony; may I not?"

"Yes, yes, Martin, be easy." As for Bertrande, she had fainted.

Eight days afterwards, the trial took place—a curious and difficult one assuredly. If Gabriel had not appeared at it, the judges of Rieux and Artigues would certainly never have been able to decide it. The prisoners were interrogated separately, and kept apart. Martin Guerre, wrapped in a cloak, was led to his wife, to Carbon Barreau, and to all the rest, and all recognised him. But they did the same for Arnold in his turn, and every one was bewildered. Both told nearly the same story, and Arnold showed letters from Bertrande, family papers, and a ring known to all; but Martin related how he had been hanged at Noyau and all his things stolen. The judges were utterly perplexed.

The president asked each, separately, this question. "Where did you pass your time from your twelfth to your sixteenth year?"

Each replied, "At St. Sebastian, in Biscay, with my cousin Sanxi."

Sanxi was there, and witnessed to the truth of this. Gabriel approached and whispered in his ear. Sanxi laughed, and spoke to Arnold in the Basque language. Arnold turned pale, and did not answer.

"How," said Gabriel, "you passed four years at St. Sebastian, and do not understand the patois?"

"I have forgotten it," murmured Arnold.

Martin, when subjected to the same trial, answered readily, to the great joy of his cousin, and to the enlightenment of the judges, who, for the first time, began to get a clue. This test was followed by another. All the inhabitants of Artigues remembered his skill at tennis; but since his return, he had always refused to play, under the pretext of having hurt his right hand. The true Martin, on the contrary, declared his willingness to exhibit his skill before the judges, which he did while still sitting and wrapped in his cloak, while a man brought back the balls which he threw with marvellous dexterity.

Henceforth the feeling was in favour of Martin. An odd circumstance completed his triumph. Gabriel had remarked that Martin's foot—now, alas! his only one—was smaller than that of his rival, and the old shoemaker of Artigues was summoned, who brought with him his new and old measures.

"It is true," said he, "his shoes are much larger than they used to be, but I thought that it might be the effect of long travelling."

Then Martin triumphantly showed his foot, which corresponded exactly with the old measure. There seemed to be no longer a doubt as to the guilt of Arnold; and Gabriel then produced the peasant to whom Arnold had given the strange commission to go to Paris and announce the hanging of Martin Guerre at Noyau. Bertrande was also called again, and asked if she had not discovered a change in the character of her husband since his return.

"Oh! yes, gentlemen," she replied, "but to his

advantage. Formerly, Martin was too weak and good-natured, he let himself be scolded to any extent; now he has returned my master—it is he who orders, and I who obey. He has shown me that I was wrong, and has taught me submission."

Several of the inhabitants also testified that the old Martin was quiet, inoffensive, and pious; while the new one was quarrelsome and irreligious, a change which they had attributed to his soldier's life.

Gabriel then recounted the whole history of the strange circumstances under which he had had both in turn in his service; how he had long been unable to account for the varying character of his squire, until he had at last arrived at the truth, and he finished by demanding the punishment of the one and the release of the other.

Arnold was present, although Martin was not, and when Gabriel had finished, he asked leave to say a few words.

He spoke well. "He did not pretend," he said, "to explain all these mysteries; all he had to do was to explain his own life and actions, which he was ready to do." This he did fully and circumstantially. "He could no longer," he added, "speak the Basque language, nor play at tennis; but every one had not a good memory for languages," and he showed the wound in his hand. And what was more easy than for his adversary to have learned a language and a game? Lastly, the Comte de Montgomery, misled by his rival, had accused him of having stolen the papers which proved his birth and identity, but he had no proof of this to offer; as for the peasant, he doubtless was an accomplice of the soi-disant Martin. And with reference to the charge of having stolen the ransom of the count, he had, it was true, returned to Artigues with money, but with more than that—and he explained the origin of his wealth, by exhibiting the certificate of M. de Montmorency, to whom he referred them.

In fine, his impudence resembled innocence so

much that Gabriel saw the judges again becoming undecided. It was necessary to strike a decisive blow, and Gabriel determined upon it. He, therefore, spoke to the president, who ordered Arnold to be removed and Martin to be brought in.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE MISTAKES SEEM LIKELY TO RECOMMENCE.

Arnold was not immediately reconducted to prison, but was placed for a time in an adjoining room. Left to his own reflections, he congratulated himself on the effect of his speech, but still he could not but fear that he had but postponed the evil day, and that the truth must come out at last.

When they came to reconvey him to the prison he noticed that his ordinary gaoler was not present; and, still more strange, that the cell in which he was placed was not the one he had previously occupied. This one had a barred window and a high chimney-piece, which the other had not. However, everything attested the recent presence of a prisoner—the remains of a loaf, a half-emptied bottle of water, a bed, and a chest with clothes in it.

Arnold, who was accustomed to restrain himself, said nothing; but when he was alone he examined the chest. There were only clothes in it, but they were of a colour and shape that he thought he recognised, especially a brown and yellow suit which was rather uncommon. "Oh!" thought he, "it would be strange."

Towards evening the gaoler entered. "Holà, Martin," said he, clapping him on the shoulder, "your affairs go well. Whom do you think has begged for, and obtained, permission to visit you?"

"Ma foi! how should I know?"

"Your wife, who doubtless begins to see where the truth lies. But it is rather late, when to-day

or to-morrow, sentence will be pronounced in your favour."

"Well, I will see her—let her come in."

In a few minutes the gaoler returned with Bertrande, and informed them that a quarter of an hour was all that was allowed.

She advanced, full of shame and with a downcast look, towards the pretended Martin, who remained quiet, and left her to speak.

"Oh! Martin," cried she, in a timid voice, "can you ever forgive me?"

"Forgive you? for what?"

"For my gross mistake. I certainly ought to have recognised you; but if I was deceived, so was every one else. I confess that to convince me of my error it was necessary for the Comte de Montgomery, and all the judges, to assure me that you were my real husband, and that the other was an impostor."

"Which do you call the impostor? He who came with M. de Montgomery, or the other who has so long been called Martin Guerre, and possessed his property?"

"Oh! he is the impostor who has deceived me so long, and whom last week I called my husband—blind that I was."

"Then it is settled now?" cried Arnold, with emotion.

"Mon Dieu! yes, Martin; the judges and your worthy master announced to me just now, that there was no longer a doubt that you were my true husband."

"Ah! really," cried he, turning pale.

"Yes; and they advised me to come and ask your pardon, and seek a reconciliation with you at once. It is true, my dear Martin, that I have been very guilty towards you, but I entreat you to remember that it was involuntarily. How could I suppose that there should be two people so exactly alike, not only in face but in figure; not, however, in character or in heart, I admit, and this perhaps should have warned me. But there was nothing to put me on my guard.

Arnold du Thill talked to me of many past things —he had your ring and your papers, and no one suspected such a fraud. I attributed your change of temper to long travelling and experience in the world; and reflect, my dear husband, that it was you whom I loved and obeyed under the guise of this stranger."

She stopped to see if he would answer and encourage her a little, but as he maintained an obstinate silence, she continued, with a sinking heart, "You doubtless think that if I was deceived when you were absent, I should at least have known you when you returned. But consider that Arnold du Thill was in possession of your name and place, and that I was naturally unwilling at first to admit a doubt, which would render me guilty. Besides, they would hardly let me see or speak to you, and you were always wrapped in a long cloak; and I never saw you both together. What could I do, and how could I decide? The judges assure me that I have been deceived, that they have full proof of it, and I return to you repentant and ashamed, trusting to your goodness and your old affection. Am I wrong to count on your indulgence?"

He was still silent, and she went on, "I am no longer the disdainful, passionate, and unreasonable woman who made you suffer so much. The bad treatment which I have received from this man has, at least, had the effect of making me docile, and you will find me so for the future; and you will be kind and good to me, as you used to be, will you not? You will pardon me, and I shall recognise your heart, as I now recognise your features."

"You do recognise me then, at last?"

"Oh! yes."

"You recognise me," persisted he, "not for the intriguer, who audaciously called himself your husband, but for the real Martin Guerre, your first and true husband?"

"Yes, doubtless."

"And by what signs do you recognise me?"

"Alas! not by your person, I admit; for were you

by the side of Arnold du Thill, and both dressed alike, I might mistake you again. I only recognise you because they told me they were bringing me to my real husband, and because you occupy this cell, and not that of Arnold."

"Miserable Arnold; and you, foolish and credulous woman!"

"Yes, reproach me; and when you have said it out, you will be good and indulgent, I know."

"Well, Bertrande, do not despair, we shall see."

"Ah! I see you are my good Martin," and she kissed his hands with delight.

"Good," thought Arnold; "you shall pay for this some day;" but, pretending to be softened, he kissed her and affected to wipe away a tear.

"What happiness!" cried she.

At this moment the door opened, and the gaoler reappeared. "Reconciled already?" said he. "I knew how it would be; you were always too indulgent, Martin."

"What! you reproach him with his goodness."

"Oh! that is his business; but now you must leave—the time is up."

"What! already?"

"Oh! to-morrow you will be together again."

"That is true. Free to-morrow; then we will resume our former happy life."

Bertrande kissed Arnold's hand once more, and left the prison.

"Can I not have a light?" he called out.

"Certainly, as usual, till nine o'clock. Dame, you are better treated than Arnold du Thill, but then your master is so generous."

As soon as Arnold was alone he took off his clothes, put on the brown and yellow suit which was in the chest, and then burned his own. "Well," thought he, "I have been condemned by the judges, but it seems to me that I shall come well out of it after all."

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE SPEECH OF THE PRISONER AGAINST HIMSELF.

Arnold did not sleep much, but employed himself in revolving his plans and chances. The project that he had conceived of again substituting himself for poor Martin was bold, no doubt, but ought to succeed by its very boldness.

About eight in the morning his door opened, and the Comte de Montgomery entered. Arnold certainly trembled, but he remained in appearance quite firm.

"Good morning, Martin," said Gabriel.

Arnold breathed again. Gabriel had looked him full in the face and had called him Martin; his disguise was, therefore, perfect, and he was saved. "Good morning, my dear master," said he.

"The sentence will probably be pronounced this morning, Martin."

"At last! Heaven be praised. There is no longer any doubt or fear, monsieur—is there? The truth will surely triumph."

"I trust so, but this Arnold has adopted a desperate measure."

"Really! what is he about now?"

"It is scarcely credible; he is still playing the old game."

"Is it possible?" cried Arnold; "but how?"

"Why, he has the impudence to assert that yesterday, after the trial, the gaolers made a mistake and took him to your cell, and you to his."

"Is it possible? And on what does he found this insolent assertion?"

"He declares that neither of you having been removed at once to the prison, the gaolers made a mistake and took you to the cell where he has hitherto been confined. And they say that he raves and weeps and asks to see me."

"And have you seen him, monsieur?"

"No, indeed; I fear his cunning tricks. Still I pity him, for he is a clever rogue, and after all he has killed no one, and yet he will doubtless be hanged. The punishment seems to me too heavy for his offence; we might, if you wished it, ask for mercy for him."

"Mercy for him!"

"It requires some reflection, I am aware, but think of it, Martin."

"No," replied Arnold, after a moment's hesitation; "no pity for him,"

"I did not know you were so implacable, Martin; you did not speak so yesterday."

"Yesterday he had not tried this last trick."

"That is true. Then your wish is that he should die."

"Mon Dieu, monsieur, you know that my nature is averse to bloodshed and violence. I am grieved to think of such a cruel necessity—but still it is a necessity. Consider, monsieur, that while this man lives my existence can never be tranquil—this last attempt shows that he is incorrigible. From prison he would escape, and from exile he would return, and I should always be unquiet and tormented. My wife and my friends would never be quite certain that I was the true Martin Guerre, and would be perpetually suspicious. I must therefore do violence to my nature, monsieur, and force myself to be unyielding."

"So be it, then. If he be condemned, for the sentence is not yet pronounced——"

"Then it is not yet certain?"

"Certain, no—but probable, although that rascal Arnold made a very subtle and persuasive speech to the judges yesterday——"

"Fool that I was," thought Arnold.

"While you, Martin," continued Gabriel, "who now speak so well to me, could then find nothing to say; you were embarrassed and almost mute, in spite of my remonstrances."

"It is, monsieur, because I am at ease in your pre-

sence, but am intimidated before the judges. Besides, I confess I relied on my good cause and thought that justice would do better for me than I could do for myself; but I see words are best when you are dealing with lawyers. Ah! if I had but my chance over again!"

"What would you do, Martin?"

"Oh! I would speak, and reduce to nothing all the arguments of Arnold du Thill."

"That would not be easy."

"Pardon me, monsieur; I saw all his weak points clearly enough, and had I been less timid could have shown them to the judges."

"Why, what could you have said?"

Arnold, in reply, began to refute his own speech from beginning to end, and with marvellous clearness showed the double lives of the two men. He would, in our days, have made a most distinguished advocate, but he had the misfortune to come into the world three hundred years too soon.

"I think this would have convinced the judges," said he, when he had finished. "I wish they had heard it."

"They have heard it," said Gabriel.

"How?"

"Look."

The door opened, and Arnold saw, to his great surprise, the President and two judges seated outside.

"What does this mean?" cried Arnold.

"It means that, knowing the timidity of my poor Martin, I wished his judges to hear him without his knowledge."

"Oh!" cried Arnold, quite reassured, "I thank you, monsieur." Then, turning towards the judges, "May I hope," said he, "that my words have established the truth of my cause?"

"Yes," said the President; "they are convincing."

"Ah!"

"But other proofs, not less convincing, convince us that there was a mistake yesterday, and that you,

Arnold du Thill, were taken to Martin's cell, and he to yours."

"How?" stammered Arnold—"what do you say to this, monsieur?"

"I say that I knew it," replied Gabriel, with severity. "I repeat to you, Arnold, that I wished you yourself to establish the innocence of Martin and your own guilt. You have forced me to play a part repugnant to me."

"Then you have laid a plot; but take care, monsieur, it is your own Martin whom you are now abandoning."

"Do not persist, Arnold du Thill," said the President; "the error was effected by the order of the tribunal, and you have hopelessly convicted yourself."

"But since you state that there was an error, who assures you, monsieur, that there was not one also in the execution of your orders?"

"The testimony of the guards and your gaolers."

"They are wrong; I am really Martin Guerre, the squire of M. de Montgomery, and I will not allow myself to be condemned in this manner. Confront us both, and then decide if you dare. As if there was not already sufficient confusion in this case, you have introduced more. I will declare to the last that I am Martin Guerre and no other."

The judges and Gabriel smiled gravely at this impudent obstinacy. "Once more, Arnold du Thill, said the President, "there is no confusion possible between you and Martin Guerre."

"And how so?—what distinguishes us?"

"You are about to know," said Gabriel, who made a sign, at which Martin appeared at the door—Martin without his cloak—Martin with his wooden leg.

"Martin, my brave squire," said Gabriel to Arnold, "escaped from the gibbet which you had prepared for him at Noyau, but could not at Calais escape a punishment destined as a retribution for one of your infamies. He was precipitated instead of you over a precipice, and lost his leg, which, by a Providence,

kind when it seemed to be cruel, now establishes the difference between you."

Arnold, pale and thunderstruck, could defend himself no longer, but only murmured, "I am lost."

CHAPTER LXIX.

JUSTICE.

Half an hour after, the accused was called to hear his sentence, in which, after setting forth that he was fully convicted of imposture, forgery, thieving, and adultery, he was condemned to kneel in the open street before the church at Artigues, with bare head and feet, and thus publicly to ask pardon of Martin Guerre and Bertrande his wife, and when this was done, he was to be delivered over to the executioner, to be led by him before the house of Martin, where he was to be hanged upon a gibbet, and his body afterwards burned.

Arnold received his sentence with a sad but submissive air, confessed his faults and professed penitence. Martin gave a new proof of his identity, by bursting into tears at the words of his persecutor. He even conquered his timidity so far as to ask the president if there was no way of obtaining pardon for Arnold. But he said that no one could grant it but the king, and that the crimes had been so glaring that he would certainly refuse.

Martin, as he could not obtain pardon for Arnold, opened his arms to his repentant and happy wife. She had no need to repeat all the prayers and arguments which she had employed with Arnold; he stopped her with a kiss, and led her joyfully home.

Eight days after, Arnold paid the penalty of his crimes, and it must be confessed that he showed a degree of courage in his last moments.

After the lapse of some weeks, as Martin sat at his door calm and happy, a cavalier approached him so gently that he did not hear his footsteps, and touched him on the shoulder.

"What! is it you, monsieur?" he cried; "pardon me, I did not see you."

"Do not excuse yourself, Martin, I came to see your happiness, not to disturb it. You are happy?"

"As a bird in the air, or a fish in the water. I have, perhaps, run enough about the world, taken part in a sufficient number of battles, and watched and fasted enough to give me the right to enjoy idleness and ease for a time. As for abundance, I find this house rich—and too rich. This money does not belong to me and I will not touch it. The greater part of it belongs to you, monsieur—it was your ransom. I have it here, ready to return it to you. As for the rest, I know not where it comes from, but it would soil my fingers, and I shall give it to the poor."

"But I fear that you will not then be very well off, Martin."

"Oh! yes, monsieur. I could not have served so long under such a generous master, without saving something. I brought a good sum with me from Paris—besides, Bertrande's friends are well off, and she has had some money left to her."

"Well, Martin, you will not refuse from me, what you would not take from Arnold. This money, which you say is mine, I give to you."

"How! monsieur; a present of such value to me!"

"This will not repay your devotion to me, Martin; I shall still be your debtor. And your wife, Martin—does she behave better to you than formerly, or does she still torment you? Will she drive you away a second time?"

"Oh! no, monsieur; she attaches me only too much to this place; she is so good to me—she is all kindness, and as I am not of a tyrannical disposition, we get on excellently together."

"Then you are quite happy; it is all I wished to know, and I can now go in peace."

"Go, already, monsieur!"

"Yes, Martin, there is nothing here to detain me."

"That is true; when do you set out?"

"This evening."

"And you gave me no notice, but I will soon be ready."

"What?"

"Bertrande! Bertrande!"

"Why do you call your wife?"

"To help me to get ready to go, monsieur."

"It is needless, Martin; you do not go with me."

"What! you do not take me with you?"

"No; I go alone."

"Not to return?"

"Not for a long time, at all events."

"Are you then dissatisfied with me?"

"No, Martin, you are the most faithful and devoted of followers."

"Then why not take me?"

"I have three good reasons."

"May I ask what they are?"

"First, it would be cruel to take you from a happiness that you have so recently gained, and from your well-earned repose——"

"Oh, as for that, it is my duty, and I could abandon everything for you."

"Yes, but I will not abuse your zeal. Secondly, the unfortunate accident at Calais prevents you, my poor Martin, from rendering active services to me."

"It is true, monsieur, that I can no longer fight at your side, nor follow you on horseback, but you doubtless have frequently confidential messages to perform, in which I would do my best, and might be useful to you."

"I know it, Martin, and perhaps I might be selfish enough to accept, if it were not for the third reason. I have no longer a glorious fight to maintain for France, but a solemn vengeance to pursue, through silent paths, in which I follow blindly—only as an instrument and not as a head—and in this you cannot aid me. So say no more, Martin. Adieu! my faithful friend, and may God protect you."

"Adieu, then, monsieur; may we meet again!"

This was all poor Martin could say through his tears.

CHAPTER LXX.

TWO LETTERS.

GABRIEL wandered about, as before, for two or three months. He then returned suddenly to his hotel, where he found Aloyse, who received him with tears, and it is impossible to paint her delight when Gabriel told her he should leave her no more. He lived in absolute solitude, went out but seldom, and then only at night, and passed long hours beside the tomb of his father.

His constant thought was for vengeance on the king, but should this be brought through a civil war, raised on behalf of the reformed religion, or by means of a revolt to be excited to support the pretensions of his old commander, M. de Guise, to the throne of France?

Sometimes it seemed to him that the wrath of God slumbered too long, and that he would take vengeance into his own hands, when the letter from Diana, which was alway next his heart, imploring him to leave vengeance to God, would again nerve his mind to patient endurance.

At last, on the 13th June, he received two letters, almost together. The first was brought to him about five o'clock in the evening by a man who would only deliver it into his own hand after comparing his face with a detailed description which he brought with him. It was as follows:—

"FRIEND AND BROTHER,—The time is come—the persecutors have raised the mask. Let us bless God—martyrdom leads to victory. Come this evening at nine o'clock to a house in the Place Maubert, No. 11, and strike at the door three distinct blows. A man

will open to you and say, 'Do not enter, you will not see clearly,' to which you will reply, 'I bring my light with me;' he will then conduct you up a dark staircase, at the top of which another person will meet you and ask, 'What do you want?' reply, 'What is just.' They will then conduct you into a room where will be whispered to you the rallying word 'Geneva;' you will respond, 'Glory.' You will then be led to those who need your aid. Till this evening, friend and brother, courage and discretion. Burn this note."

Gabriel burnt the letter and sent only the answer, "I will come." About eight o'clock, while he was thinking of this summons, a page was brought to him by Aloyse with this letter—

"MONSIEUR AND DEAR COMPANION,—I have been six weeks in Paris, as the army had no longer anything to do. I am told that you also are at home—are you like others, and have you forgotten me in these times of forgetfulness and ingratitude? No! I know you, and it is impossible. Come, then—I will wait for you to-morrow evening at ten o'clock at my lodgings at the Tournelles. Come, if it be only that we may condole with each other, on the bad use they have made of our successes. Your affectionate friend, "FRANÇOIS DE LORRAINE."

"I will come," said Gabriel, again.

It is a matter of history, that the Constable de Montmorency, jealous of the fame of the Duc de Guise, had induced Henry the Second to sign a peace little advantageous to France, and in which one of the articles was, that Calais was to be retained by the French for eight years only, and that if it were not restored at the expiration of that time, France should pay 100,000 gold crowns to England. This, however, was never really carried into execution. This, and similar weaknesses, infuriated the Duc de Guise almost to madness, after the advantages he had gained. But it was done and there was no redress.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE MEETING OF THE PROTESTANTS.

THE house in the Place Maubert was that of an advocate named Trouillard. It had already been vaguely supposed, in the neighbourhood, to be a place of rendezvous for the heretics, and psalms had been heard sung there, but it had not yet been visited by the police.

Gabriel followed the instructions contained in his letter, and everything took place as had been intimated. Then La Renaudie came to him and pressed his hand warmly, saying, "Do you know what passed in the parliament to-day?"

"No, I have never left the house."

"Well, you shall hear all. You are not yet pledged to us, but we have implicit confidence in you—you shall know our designs and our strength—then you shall be free to act as you please. You have said your were with us in heart, and that is enough; I do not even ask for your word not to reveal anything you hear."

"Thanks for this confidence; you shall not repent it."

"Come with me and stay by my side, and I will tell you the names of those you do not know."

He took Gabriel by the hand; pushed a secret spring, and entered into a large hall, dimly lighted and bare of furniture, except a great wooden chair for the speaker. No one remarked the entrance of Gabriel. All eyes were turned to him who then occupied the chair.

"It is the Counsellor Nicholas Duval," said La Renaudie, naming him to Gabriel, who listened eagerly to the speaker, who was stating to the assembly what had passed in the parliament.

"Our ordinary room," said Duval, "being occu-

pied by the preparations for the fêtes to take place at the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth, we sat for the time at the Augustins. The president opened the sitting as usual, and then was resumed the question of the previous Friday, about religious opinions. Antoine Fumée, Paul Dufoix, and Eustache, spoke in favour of toleration, and their eloquent discourses seemed to make a great impression on the majority, and we were about to take the votes when an usher opened the door, and announced the king. He entered, accompanied by the Cardinal de Lorraine and M. de Montmorency.

"All the members rose in surprise. 'I do not come to derange your deliberations, but to aid them,' said he. Then, after a few insignificant compliments, he finished by saying, 'Peace is concluded with Spain, but there have been dreadful heresies introduced into this kingdom, which we must now extinguish. Why have you not passed an edict against the Lutherans, as I directed you? However, I repeat, continue your deliberations freely.' Henri Dufoix, who had been speaking upon this courageously, began again—pleaded the cause of liberty of conscience, and even added some severe strictures on the conduct of the government.

"Henry the Second bit his lips, but kept silence. Then Dubourg rose and uttered still more serious and direct remonstrances. 'I feel, sire,' said he, 'that there are certain crimes that ought to be punished without mercy—such as adultery, murder, or blasphemy—but of what do they accuse these men who are given over to the axe of the executioner? Of treason?—Never have they omitted the name of the king in their prayers.—Never have they preached treason or revolt. What! because they have discovered by the light of the Scriptures, the errors of the Romish Church—because they ask for reforms—is this a crime worthy of death?'

"The king did not move, but every one could see his anger. Le Maitre, the president, tried basely to propitiate him. 'They are heretics,' he said, with a

feigned indignation. 'Let us finish with them, as with the Albigenses; Philippe Augustus had six hundred of them burned in one day.' 'M. le President is right,' said the king; 'we must extirpate the heretics or they must fly; and to commence—M. de Montmorency, arrest immediately those two rebels,' and he pointed to Dufoix and Dubourg. I need not tell you that the constable obeyed orders, and they were seized at once. They also afterwards arrested those who had spoken before the arrival of the king, and simply in defence of religious toleration. It is therefore certain that it was not for their opposition to the king, but for their religious opinions that they were arrested."

Nicholas Duval finished amidst the murmurs and exclamations of the assembly. Then La Renaudie spoke.

"Brethren," said he, "after what has taken place, so contrary to all justice, it is for us to determine what we shall do. Shall we still wait patiently, or shall we act? These are the questions that each must put to himself; our persecutors think of nothing less than a general massacre. Are we to sit down and wait for it, or, since law and justice are violated on the side of our enemies, shall we do justice to ourselves, and substitute force for law? Reply, friends and brothers."

The speech of La Renaudie was followed by a long silence. In spite of the indignation at the conduct of the king, with which all hearts were full, royalty still preserved too great a prestige for the reformed, young conspirators, to dare to express openly any desire for rebellion. They were resolved and devoted as a body—but each individually recoiled before the responsibility of the first step. Besides, there were in reality among them, two parties—the one desired a republic, and the other, which comprised the nobles, wished merely to exchange Henry the Second for a Calvinist king, and already spoke of the Prince de Condé.

Some time having passed in confused murmurs and painful indecision, La Renaudie turned to a little thin man with thick eyebrows and a bilious look, and said, "Well, Seguières, will you give us your sentiments?"

"Yes," replied he, with flashing eyes, "but boldly, and softening nothing, for am I not with friends?"

While Seguières was taking the chair, Renaudie whispered to Gabriel, "I resort to dangerous means. This Seguières is a fanatic, who pushes things to extremes, and provokes repulsion rather than sympathy; but it is necessary, at any risk, to know what we are to expect from our party."

The orator began abruptly: "The law itself has been violated; what appeal remains to us? that of force and no other. You ask what we must do—let this reply for me," said he, holding up a silver medal. "This medal is more eloquent than words can be. To those who cannot see what it is, I will explain the device. It is a flaming sword cutting down a lily—the sceptre and the crown roll in the dust! Medals generally serve as a commemoration of the past, but let this one be prophetic of the future. I will say no more."

He descended from the chair, amidst the applause of a few, and the murmurs of the many.

"This cord does not vibrate among us, let us try another," said La Renaudie. "M. de Castelnau," said he, addressing an elegant young man who stood near him, "will you address the assembly?"

"I thought I should have had nothing to say," answered he, "but I have to reply, and I will commence like those who have preceded me. They have acted wickedly towards us—let us defend ourselves—let us return their attack in the open field. But in all else, I differ in opinion from M. de Seguières. I also have a medal to show you. It looks at a distance like an ordinary piece of money, but the head—instead of being that of Henry the Second—is that of Lodovicus the Thirteenth."

Many applauded him, but the mass remained silent and unmoved.

"What do they want?" asked Gabriel. "Nothing, I fear."

The advocate Des Avenelles now mounted the chair. "This, I believe, will prove the most popular man," said La Renaudie. "Honest and wise, but too timid—too prudent."

"We have just heard," said Avenelles, "cold and courageous words, but is the time really arrived to act upon them? Are we not going too fast? They show us a high aim, but do not point out the means, which can only be criminal. As much as any one here I have my heart torn by these persecutions, but while we still have prejudices to conquer, should we throw on our cause the odium of an assassination—yes! of an assassination—for you can obtain these ends by no other means."

Almost unanimous plaudits followed this speech. "I told you so," said La Renaudie to Gabriel.

Des Avenelles resumed, "The king is in the vigour and prime of life. To dethrone him, he must be torn down, and kings are divine, and God only has power over them. Ah! if some accident or even some private attempt, were to take away the king's life, and placed the guardianship of a young king in the hands of his insolent subjects who oppress us, then it would be them and not royalty—the Guises, and not François the Second—that we should attack. Civil war would then become praiseworthy, and revolt holy, and I would be the first to cry—to arms!"

This mixture of energy and timidity pleased the assembly, and they applauded, almost unanimously, the prudent courage of Des Avenelles.

"Ah!" said La Renaudie to Gabriel, "I regret I brought you here; you will despise us. What do you then mean to do?" said he, addressing the others.

"Remain within the pale of the law," answered the advocate. "Our friends have been arrested, but who says that they will be condemned? My opinion is,

that violence on our part will only provoke the same on theirs. Our moderation may save the victims; let us have the strength of right, and let all the wrong be on the side of our enemies. Let us wait. When they see us moderate and firm, they will not be willing to provoke hostilities; and I beg you, my friends, to think twice before you hazard reprisals."

The applause was redoubled. "Let all who think with me, hold up their hands," said he.

An immense show of hands proved that he had stated the feelings of the assembly.

"Our decision is then taken," he said.

"To do nothing?" said Castelnau.

"To defer extreme measures to a more favourable time," answered Avenelles.

"Let us go," said La Renaudie. "All this irritates and exasperates me. These people can do nothing but sing."

Gabriel and his friend separated at the corner of the Pont Nôtre Dame. "Adieu, M. d'Exmes, I am sorry to have made you lose your time. Believe, however, that it is not the last word. Coligny and some of our best men were absent to-night.

CHAPTER LXXII.

ANOTHER TRIAL.

Although the Protestants failed him, there yet remained to Gabriel the ambition of the Duc de Guise. Therefore the next evening at the appointed time, he went to the appointed rendezvous. The duke received him warmly. "Here you are at last, forgetful friend," said he. "I was forced to seek you, or Heaven knows when I should have seen you. Why did you not come to me?"

"Monseigneur, sad preoccupations——"

"Ah! I was sure of it. They have deceived you also—have they not? They have failed in their promises to you, the saviour of France. My brother, who was present when you announced yourself as the Vicomte de Montgomery, feared you would be the victim of these people. Why did you not apply to him? He might have been of use to you in my absence."

"I thank you, monseigneur, but they strictly kept their promise to me."

"You say that in a tone——"

"I speak as I feel, but I make no complaints. Speak no more of my affairs, I pray; it is a subject which never pleases me, and it is now more painful to me than ever. I beg you, therefore, monseigneur, to desist from your kind inquiries."

The duke was struck by his mournful tone. "It is enough, my friend; I will say no more. But remember that in every place, and at all times, my credit, my fortune, and everything are yours; and if ever you have need of me, you have but to speak."

"I thank you heartily, monseigneur; and now will you speak of yourself—of your glory and your projects, which always interest me?"

"My glory! my projects! Alas! it is a sad theme."

"What do you mean, monseigneur?"

"It is true; I did think, I confess, that I had gained some reputation, and that my name would be pronounced with some respect in France, and with some terror in Europe. I dreamed also of a glorious future, and of great things for my country and myself, which I think I might have accomplished."

"Well, monseigneur?"

"But, Gabriel, during the last six weeks, since I have returned to court, I have ceased to believe in my glory, and have renounced all my projects."

"And why?"

"Do you not know the shameful treaty which followed our victories? Had we been forced to raise the siege of Calais—had the English still the gates of

France in their power—had we shown by our defeat the inferiority of our forces, and the impossibility of maintaining an equal contest, we could not have concluded a more disadvantageous treaty than that of Cateau-Cambrésis."

"It is true, monseigneur, and every one deplores the poor results from such a magnificent harvest."

"Then why should I continue to sow for those who reap so badly? Besides, I am condemned to inaction by this splendid treaty; my sword is fated to rust in its scabbard, and all my dreams of glory are extinguished; and this, doubtless, was the motive of their conduct."

"But you are not the less powerful even in repose, monseigneur. The court respects you—the people adore you—and the enemy fears you."

"Yes, I am loved and feared without, no doubt, but do not say that I am respected at the Louvre. While they have publicly cast away the certain results of my successes, they have also privately undermined my influence. Who is in favour now? That insolent Montmorency—the vanquished at St. Laurent—he whom I hate. It was by him, and for him, that this disgraceful peace was concluded. He is protected by something stronger than glory, and by some one more powerful than the king himself. My services can never equal those of Madame de Poitiers—may perdition seize her! Do you know what has been my recompense besides this treaty? The revocation of my rank as lieutenant-general of the kingdom; such an office being, as they say, useless in time of peace; so, without warning and without thanks, they have deprived me of this title."

"Is it possible that they have treated you so?"

"What need of ceremony towards a useful servant? But if they come again to implore—to adjure me to save the country—I will refer them to their constable; let him save them if he can. For myself, since they condemn me to idleness, I will remain in it."

Gabriel, after a pause, replied, gravely,—"I am

sorry for this determination, monseigneur, for I came to make a proposition to you."

"What! in time of peace?"

"Yes, monseigneur, that is what makes it practicable."

"Really! Is it something bold, like the siege of Calais?"

"More so, monseigneur."

"How? I confess you excite my curiosity."

"You permit me to speak?"

"I beg you to do so."

"Well, monseigneur, they have taken your titles from you—take them back again."

"How?"

"Monsieur, the people love you, and the army is your own. You are more king of France than the king himself; and if you speak as a master, your subjects will listen. Will Henry the Second be stronger in the Louvre than you in your camp? He who speaks to you would be happy to call you his majesty."

"This is indeed a bold idea, Gabriel," said the duke, but he smiled under his feigned surprise.

"I speak for the good of France; if you were once free and master, where would your genius stop? You would rival Charlemagne, and be to the Valois a Hugh Capet."

"But if I were only a Constable de Bourbon?"

"Oh! monseigneur, he called strangers to his aid; you would use only your own countrymen. There are two parties to resort to."

"Which?"

"The army and the reformers. You might be a military chief, monseigneur?"

"An usurper."

"Say a conqueror. But if you prefer it, you may be the king of the Huguenots."

"And the Prince de Condé."

"He has talent, doubtless; but you have greatness and éclat. Do you think Calvin would hesitate between you? Only say the word, and to-morrow you shall have at your disposal 30,000 reformers."

"But I am a Catholic prince."

"The religion of men like you is glory."

"I should embroil myself with Rome."

"It will be a pretext to conquer it."

"My friend, how you hate Henri II."

"As much as I love you, I confess."

"I esteem your sincerity, Gabriel, and will imitate it. I admit that I have already approached in my dreams, the aim which you now point out to me. But before venturing on such a step, one must be sure of success, and to risk an attempt of this nature prematurely is to lose all."

"That is true."

"Well, do you really think the time favourable? Do you think men's minds are prepared for a change of kings."

"They will become so."

"I doubt it; I have done much, but not enough for that. There are malcontents no doubt, but a party is not a people. Besides Henri is brave, and he is the son of François I."

"Then you hesitate, monseigneur?"

"I do more, my friend, I refuse. Ah! if Henri were to die——"

"He also thinks of that," murmured Gabriel. "Well, in that case, monseigneur, what would you do?"

"Then, under a young and inexperienced king, I should be, in some sort, regent of the kingdom. I might become necessary, and then, Gabriel, your projects might be realised."

"But till then—till this improbable death——"

"I will resign myself to wait."

"This is your decision, monseigneur?"

"It is, but I thank you none the less for your wishes for me."

Gabriel took his leave, and returned home sadder than when he left.

CHAPTER LXXIII

A DANGEROUS STEP.

Diana de Castro, on her side, lived in grief at the Louvre. She also waited, and her passive part was, perhaps, still more painful than Gabriel's. Every week, however, she sent André, who had returned to her, to ask Aloyse for news of her master. The accounts were always the same—he was silent, sad, and restless. Diana hesitated long, but, at last, one morning, she took courage, and, wrapping herself in a cloak, went, accompanied by André, to see him. Since he avoided her, since he would no longer speak to her, she must go to him.

All her courage was useless, for when she knocked with a trembling hand at his door, she was told that he was out, nor could they tell her when he would return. She dared not wait too long, lest her absence should be commented on. However, she determined to wait a little while, and asked to see Aloyse. They had not met since the happy days at Montgomery and Vimontiers. Therefore, Diana, on seeing her, ran to her arms, calling out, "Dear Aloyse."

Aloyse was moved to tears, "You remember me," she cried.

"Remember you! Do I remember my happy home and the Castle of Montgomery!"

"How beautiful you are!" cried Aloyse, with a smile and a sigh.

"It was not of myself that I came to speak, nurse."

"Of him, then?"

"Of what else? To you I may open my heart. How unlucky it is that he is not here. I came to console him and myself. How is he? Very sad, I

fear. And why has he not been once to the Louvre to see me? What does he do? Tell me, nurse."

"Alas, madam, he is indeed sad and desolate."

"Wait, good nurse, before you begin. I must not have my absence from the Louvre remarked; so when I have been here an hour, send me away."

"I am as likely to forget time as you, madam; but we will tell some one else."

Diana then called André, and desired him to summon her at the expiration of an hour. There was much embarrassment between Diana and Aloyse, for neither knew whether the other was aware of Gabriel's sad story. However the nurse told all she knew of his habits, his sadness, and his melancholy life. Diana felt pleasure in hearing him spoken of, but felt also profound grief for his sad and wasted existence. Both started when André knocked at the door.

"What! already," cried Diana. "One word more, nurse; has he ever spoken of me?"

'Never, madam; I wish he did not think of you."

"You believe he does?"

"I am sure of it."

"Yet he avoids me."

"If he avoids the Louvre, madam, it is, perhaps, not on account of her he loves."

"I understand," thought Diana, "it is on account of him he hates." Then she said aloud, "I must see him."

"Shall I tell him to come to you at the Louvre?"

"No, no; not at the Louvre; I will watch—I will find another occasion, and will come here again."

"But if he were out again; what day—what week would it be? He would wait, you may be sure."

"Alas! poor king's daughter that I am, can I tell when I may be free? But if I can, I will send André beforehand."

At this moment the page knocked again, fearing he had not been heard.

"Adieu, nurse; embrace me once more," said

Diana; "watch over him, and take care of him well."

Gabriel returned home, tired and sad as usual; but when Aloyse pronounced the name of Diana, he started up with vivacity. "What did she want—what did she say? oh! why was I not here?"

Aloyse told him what she had said.

"She wishes to see me; she has something to say to me, but she does not know when she can return? I cannot remain in this suspense; I must go to the Louvre."

"Mon Dieu! to the Louvre!"

"Yes; I am not banished from the Louvre, I suppose, and he who saved Madame de Castro at Calais, may certainly go to pay his respects to her here."

"Assuredly; but Madame de Castro herself seemed to dread your coming."

"Have I then anything to fear?" asked Gabriel, proudly.

"No, it was probably for herself that she feared."

"Her reputation would suffer far more by a secret visit to me, if it were discovered, than by a public visit from me to her, which I will make at once."

"But, monsieur, you have till now avoided the Louvre."

"I did not go to see Diana until she called for me; I avoided the Louvre when I had no motive for going there; but now she asks for me, and I will go."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE IMPRUDENCE OF PRECAUTION.

Gabriel penetrated to Madame de Castro's apartments at the Louvre without opposition. She was sitting embroidering with one of her women when André entered hastily.

"Here is M. d'Exmès, madam," said he.

Gabriel entered at this moment, conquering his emotion as he best could. He bowed profoundly to

Diana, who dismissed by a gesture her page and her woman. When they were alone, they advanced and pressed each other's hands.

"You came to me, Diana—you wished to see me, to speak to me, and I am here."

"Was it my coming that told you I wished to see you, Gabriel? Did you not know it without that?"

"Diana," replied he, with a sad smile, "I have proved my courage elsewhere, so I need not be afraid to say that I feared to come here."

"Feared what?"

"You,—myself."

"And therefore you preferred to forget our old affection—I speak of the legitimate side of this affection," added she, quickly.

"I confess I would have forgotten it if I could, Diana, rather than come here; but I could not. Even while I avoided you, I would have given the world to see you—even for a moment. I have wandered about, hoping to catch a glimpse of you, and at your advance—prudence, duty, fear—all were forgotten; and here I am in the Louvre, and I answer all your questions, fearing that all this is dangerous and mad, and yet I do it."

"Oh! Gabriel."

"Yes, Diana, I should have been wiser had I continued to avoid you; and it would have been better, perhaps, for you also. I preferred that you should suffer from the uncertainty, rather than from the certainty of grief."

Diana began to fear that she might indeed have done better to remain in her painful state of doubt; but it was now too late. So she said, "I wished to see you, Gabriel, for two reasons—to give you an explanation, and to ask for one."

"Speak, Diana."

"I wished, firstly, to tell you why, after your message, I did not at once take the veil you sent me, and enter into a convent as I promised you at Calais."

"I sent you word by André, that I released you

from that promise, and it was not a meaningless message from me."

"It was my fixed resolution to become a nun; and this intention is not changed—only adjourned,"

"Why, Diana, should you renounce a world which you are so fitted to adorn?"

"Be easy on that point, Gabriel. I shall do it less to keep my promise, than to satisfy the secret desire of my soul to quit a world in which I have suffered so much. I need repose, and can only find it with God. But I would not at once accomplish this desire, for I wished to watch, and see if you complied with the request contained in my last letter—that you do not make yourself judge and executioner. I hoped, if needful, to throw myself between those whom I love, but who hate each other, and perhaps prevent a misfortune or a crime. Do you blame me for this thought, Gabriel?"

"Do we blame the angels for their nature, Diana?"

"But oh! Gabriel, I act in the dark, and by chance; and it was as to this that I wished to question you."

"Diana, it is a fatal curiosity."

"Never mind; I can exist no longer in this state of terrible perplexity. Tell me, Gabriel, have you acquired the certainty that I am your sister, or have you lost all hope of discovering the truth? Tell me, I implore you."

"I will," said Gabriel, sadly. "I have, since I left you in Calais, accustomed myself to think of you as my sister, but the truth is that I know nothing. Only, as you say, I have lost all hope of ever knowing."

"Mon Dieu! Then he who was to tell you had ceased to live on your return to Calais?"

'He lived still, Diana."

'Then they did not keep their promise; and yet I heard that the king had received you so well."

"Diana, you shall hear all—you shall share my sad secret to the end." He then recounted all that had passed, to which Diana listened without interruption, but with a look of terror and dismay.

Her first words, when he had finished, were, with a kind of cry, "Pardon for the king."

"Ah! you ask pardon. You deem him guilty, then; you condemn him yourself—you know he merits death."

"Oh! Gabriel."

"Yes; you think with me, only our natures are different. The woman asks for pardon, and the man for justice."

At this moment some one knocked at the door, which was immediately opened by André. "Excuse me, madam, but here is a letter from the king," said he.

Diana opened the royal letter, and read, with an increasing terror, the following:—

"My dear Diana,—They tell me that you are at home; do not, I pray, go out till you have seen me. I am at the council, which will break up almost immediately, and on leaving it I will come direct to see you. It is so long since we have been alone, that I quite long for a tête-à-tête with my beloved daughter, and I feel sad. "HENRI."

Diana, very pale, crushed the letter in her hand. What should she do? send away Gabriel?—he might meet the king on the way. If she detained him, the king would be sure to see him. A meeting of the two whom she wished to keep asunder seemed almost inevitable, and she would have brought it about.

"What does the king say to you?" asked Gabriel, with affected calmness.

"Nothing, nothing—an order for the reception this evening."

"I disturb you, perhaps; I will go."

"No, no; remain. But if you have anything you wish to do, I will not keep you."

"This letter has troubled you, Diana: I fear I am in the way."

"You, my friend! Can you think so? Did I not go to seek you? Alas! imprudently, I fear. I will see you again, but not here—at your own house, as soon as I have an opportunity. I promise you. For

the present, I confess, I am rather preoccupied—rather suffering."

"I see it, Diana, and I leave you," said Gabriel, sadly.

She went with him to the door. "If I keep him," thought she, "he must see the king; but if I send him away at once, the meeting may be avoided." Still she hesitated and trembled. "One last word, Gabriel," she said, "an important one; you have not told me what you mean to do. I cried mercy, and you cried justice; but how do you hope to obtain this justice?"

"I know nothing—I trust to God, and to opportunity."

"Oh! what do you mean? Come in again, Gabriel. You shall not go till you have explained this last word." And, taking him by the hand, she led him in again.

"If he meet the king in going," thought she, "they will be alone; but if they meet here, I shall be present." Then she said aloud, "I feel better, Gabriel; remain, and give me this explanation."

"No, Diana; you are more agitated than ever, and I begin to comprehend your terror. You fear my vengeance on the guilty, and though it terrifies, it would not astonish you; and you keep me here to prevent a meeting."

Diana trembled; but, rallying herself, she said, "Oh! Gabriel, how could you think I should have such thoughts of you? You! my Gabriel, a murderer—you strike by surprise one who could not defend himself? Impossible! it would be a cowardice. You imagine I retain you from this fear; go—I open the door for you; I am easy on this point. Leave me now—leave the Louvre in peace. I will see you soon."

She accompanied him to the ante-chamber, and then said, "Adieu, Gabriel! you force me to send you away, to prove your suspicions wrong."

"Adieu, Diana," said he, with his usual melancholy smile.

She looked after him as long as she could see him, and then, returning to her room and falling on her knees, cried, "Oh, God! watch over him, who is perhaps my brother, over him who is perhaps my father. Preserve from each other the two beings I love!"

In spite of the efforts of Diana, what she had feared took place. Gabriel went mechanically along the galleries of the Louvre, without paying much attention to external objects. All at once, however, as he entered a gallery, he shuddered, for at the opposite end a door opened and the king appeared before him, advancing alone, without arms or attendants. The injured and the injurer met for the first time since the injury had been committed. Gabriel stopped short and stood like a statue; his head reeled, and he was incapable of even forming a determination. The king also stopped, and, in spite of his undoubted courage, the feeling he experienced was nothing less than terror. Still, he would not give way to it. To call any one was to show fear—to retire was to fly; so he advanced towards Gabriel, who never moved, but laid his hand upon his sword. The king thought his last hour had come, and justly. Still he moved on as if urged by some irresistible power. In his trouble, as he approached, he put his hand to his cap and saluted Gabriel, who did not return it, but let him pass without moving or speaking.

Once passed, the king recovered himself. He said to himself that Gabriel must be coming from his daughter's apartments, but he did not dare to ask her about it, and he returned, sad and unquiet. "And yet," thought he, "this man does not want to kill me, for I offered myself to his sword and he let me pass."

CHAPTER LXXV.

PRESAGES.

The preparations were going on for the magnificent fêtes which the king was about to give on the occasion

of the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth to Philippe II., and of his sister Margaret to the Duke of Savoy. The contract of the latter was to be signed on the 28th June, and Henri announced that on this and the two following days there would be open lists for tournaments and other chivalric games, and under the pretext of doing honour to the young couple, but in reality to satisfy his own passionate taste for these amusements, he declared his intention of taking a part in them himself.

On the morning of the 28th the queen asked for an interview with the king, which was at once granted, and Catherine entered his room in some agitation.

"Sire," cried she, "in Heaven's name, do not go out of the Louvre until the end of this month."

"And why not, madam?"

"Because some misfortune will happen to you if you do."

"Who told you so?"

"Your star, sire."

Catherine de Medicis had already commenced those astrological studies which, if the memoirs of the time may be believed, rarely deceived her. But Henri II. was very incredulous on this point, and replied, laughing, "Oh! madam, if my star announces a danger, it will reach me as readily in here as outside."

"No, sire; it is in the open air that you are menaced."

"It is perhaps, then, a whirlwind."

"Sire, do not jest about these things; the stars are the written words of God."

"It must be confessed, then, that the divine writing is in general very obscure and unintelligible, and may be interpreted by every one according to his own idea."

"Then your majesty will go out?"

"Under other circumstances I should have been happy to have obliged you by remaining at home; but I have publicly announced that I shall appear at these fêtes, and I must do so."

"At least, sire, you will not appear in the lists?"

"Here, also, my promised word obliges me, to my regret, to refuse you. I am grateful to you for your solicitude, but I cannot but look on your fears as chimerical."

"Sire, I am accustomed to yield to your will, and I do so again to-day, although with terror in my heart."

"And you will come to the Tournelles, madam, were it only to applaud my skill and convince yourself of the groundlessness of your fears?"

"I will obey you to the end, sire."

Catherine was, in fact, present with all her ladies, except Diana, who excused herself. At the first tournay the king challenged all comers.

"Well, madam," said Henri, in the evening, "so the stars were wrong."

"Alas! the month of June is not finished," replied she.

The second day passed in the same manner, and again Henri said, with a laugh, "You see your stars were wrong again."

"I fear more than ever for to-morrow, sire."

The last day was to be the most brilliant of all. The four challengers were the king, who wore black and white, the colours of Madame de Poitiers, the Duc de Guise, Alphonse d'Este, Duc de Ferrara, and Jacques de Savoie, Duc de Nemours. "They were," says Brantôme, "four of the best men-at-arms in all Europe."

They did marvels on that day, and no one knew to whom to give the palm. Henri was in his element, and was happy and excited. However, the evening was at last closing in, and the trumpets sounded the last course. It was the turn of M. de Guise, and he concluded amidst great applause. Then the queen rose with a sigh of relief.

"What! is it finished already?" cried the king—"and it is my turn now?"

M. de Vielleville observed to the king that as he had commenced he had had equal turns with the others.

"Oh!" replied Henri, impatiently, "if the king begins, he ought to finish."

"But, sire, there is no other assailant."

"Yes, there is; he who has kept his vizor down all the time, and has not yet run. Who is he, Vielleville?"

"I do not know, sire; I had not remarked him."

"Monsieur," said Henri, advancing towards him, "you shall, if you please, break this last lance with me."

The chevalier remained for a moment without replying, and then said, in an agitated voice, "Your majesty must permit me to refuse this offer."

"Permit you to refuse! No, monsieur," said the king, angrily.

Then the unknown raised his vizor, and the king saw the pale face of Gabriel de Montgomery.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE FATAL TOURNAY.

At the sight of his sad and solemn countenance the king felt a shudder run through his veins; but he would not acknowledge to himself, much less show to others, this feeling which he endeavoured to repress; and because he had felt fear for a moment, he determined to be brave and rash.

Gabriel said gravely, a second time, "I beg of your majesty not to persist in this request."

"But I do persist, M. de Montgomery," replied the king.

Henri, thinking he discovered a kind of menace in Gabriel's words, grew obstinate, and determined not to yield to a weakness which he judged unworthy of a king of France; therefore, he continued, "Make ready, monsieur, to run against me."

At this moment M. de Boisy came to him, and

said, that the queen begged him for love of her not to run this last course."

"Tell the queen," answered he, "that it is just for love of her that I do run."

Gabriel thought no longer, and scarcely seemed to breathe. He moved mechanically, and as if in a dream, doing instinctively what he had done before in like circumstances.

M. de Vielleville gave the signal. The two horses started off at full gallop, and Gabriel and the king met in the middle of the course, and passed each other without accident. The queen cast a look of relief and thankfulness to heaven. But she rejoiced too soon.

They were to pass each other again in returning; but what danger could there be in this? However, whether intentionally or from absence of mind, Gabriel did not, as was customary, throw away the lance which he had just broken, but in the return carried the jagged stump in the rest. It struck against the head of the king, and the violence of the blow, from the rapidity of his horse, was so great that the vizor was raised, and the lance entered the king's eye, and came out at his ear. A great cry was raised by all the spectators.

"Ah! I am dead!" were the king's first words; then he murmured, "Let nothing be done to the Comte de Montgomery. It was justice. I pardon him," and he fainted.

It is impossible to describe the scene that followed. They bore away the queen, half dead; and carried the king, who was still insensible, to his room at the Tournelles. Gabriel had dismounted, and leaned against the barrier, motionless and petrified, as if the blow had struck himself. The last words of the king had been heard, and no one dared to touch him, though all regarded him with looks of terror and repugnance. The Admiral Coligny was the only one who had courage to approach him.

He passed near him, and said, in a low tone, "This is a terrible affair, friend; I know well that it was an

accident, but you may get into trouble, and I advise you to quit France for a time. Count always on me. Au revoir!"

"Thank you," said Gabriel, without moving.

A few minutes after the Duc de Guise approached, and whispered, "An unlucky blow, Gabriel. But I can only pity, not blame you. If any one had heard our conversation the other day they would have thought this suspicious. But never mind. I am powerful, and devoted to you, as you know. Keep yourself concealed, but do not quit Paris—it is useless. If any one accuses you, think of me."

"Thanks, monseigneur," said Gabriel, in the same abstracted manner.

It was evident that the Duc de Guise, and, perhaps, Coligny also, thought it had not been entirely an accident. Gabriel walked slowly away, and returned to his own house without molestation.

At the Tournelles, the king's room was closed against all, except the queen, his children, and the surgeons—the latter of whom soon declared that there was no hope. The king remained insensible for four days; on the fifth he revived a little, and ordered that his sister's marriage should be celebrated. He spoke also to the queen and his children, but fever came on; and on the 10th of July he died. The same day Diana de Castro set off for her old convent at St. Quentin.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE REIGN OF FRANÇOIS THE SECOND. A NEW STATE OF THINGS.

To the favourite of a king, disgrace is like death, therefore Gabriel had sufficiently revenged himself on the Constable and Madame de Poitiers, for through him they fell from power into exile, and from fame into obscurity. It was this result that Gabriel waited to see.

During the eleven days that Henri lingered before his death the constable did everything in his power to

preserve his influence in the government, and had neglected nothing and no one who could assist him to make head against the Duc de Guise. Madame de Poitiers aided him to the utmost.

When, on the 10th July, the young king was proclaimed, who was but sixteen, although the law declared him of age, on account of his youth, inexperience, and weak health, it was deemed necessary for some years to make over the conduct of affairs to a minister who, acting under his name, would be more powerful than himself. Who this should be, was the question. The Duc de Guise, the Constable, or Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre, the next heir to the throne after the princes. On the 12th François was to receive at three o'clock the deputies from the Parliament, and he whom he should then present to them as his minister might, in fact, be considered king.

Catherine and the Duc de Guise had each, under the pretext of condoling with the young king, paid him a visit that morning for the purpose of urging their own claims. Catherine had even infringed, for this important point, the etiquette which enjoined her to remain forty days without showing herself. Oppressed and neglected by her husband, she had felt awaken in her, during the last week, that vast and profound ambition which occupied her for the rest of her life; but as she could not really be regent to a king who was of age, her only chance was to reign through a minister who was devoted to her. The constable she put out of the question, for he had always supported Madame de Poitiers. Antoine de Bourbon would have been a more docile instrument in her hand, but he was of the reformed religion, and Jeanne d'Albret, his wife, was ambitious, besides which his title as prince of the blood, joined to this power, might inspire him with dangerous thoughts. There remained the Duc de Guise—but would he share his power with her, or would he aspire to govern alone? This she wished to know, and endeavoured to find out in the interview which took place in the presence of the young king and queen.

They, still children, simple and loving, were ready to place confidence in the first comer who could skilfully gain possession of their minds. They sincerely grieved for the king's death, and Catherine found them sad and desolate.

"My son," said she, "it is right of you to shed these tears for the loss of one whom you, most of all, have reason to deplore. You know that I partake your grief, but remember that you have got other duties to perform besides those of a son, for you are also a father—the father of your people; after having paid your tribute of regret to the past, turn your thoughts towards the future—remember that you are a king, my son.'

"Alas! madam, the sceptre of France is a heavy burden for a hand of sixteen, and nothing had prepared me to think that such a task would fall on me so early."

"Sire, accept with gratitude and resignation the charge that God has imposed upon you. It will be for those who surround you and love you, to lighten it as much as lies in their power, and to join their efforts to yours to help you to sustain it worthily."

"Madam, I thank you," replied the young king, uncertain how to answer, and mechanically he turned towards the duke as if to ask for counsel.

"Yes, sire," said he, "thank the queen for her good and encouraging words, and do not be content with simply thanking her, but tell her that, among those who love you and whom you love, she will always hold the first place, and that you count on her efficacious and maternal assistance in the difficult task which you have been called so young to fulfil."

"My uncle Guise has faithfully interpreted my thoughts, madam," replied the young king, delighted, "and has expressed them better than I could have done."

Catherine cast on the duke a grateful glance. "Sire," said she, "all the little wisdom I possess is at your service, and I shall be happy and proud each time you consult me; but I am only a woman, and you want by your side a defender who holds a sword. This strong arm—this male energy, you will doubt-

less seek among those whose alliance and relationship make your natural supporters."

Thus was a mute compact entered into between these two, which, however, we must confess, was not very sincere on either side, and not likely to last long.

The king understood his mother, and encouraged by a glance from Marie, held out his hand to his uncle. However, Catherine did not wish him to engage himself to the duke until she had obtained some pledges from him, so she said, "But before you choose a minister, sire, I have a request to make."

"Say an order to give me, madam."

"Well, my son, it concerns a woman who has done much harm to France. It is not for us to blame the weakness, which is now more than ever sacred to us, but as your father is now unhappily no more, his will no longer reigns here, and yet this woman dares to remain to insult and afflict me by her presence. During the long lethargy of the king, it was represented to her that her residence here was no longer desirable. 'Is the king dead?' she asked, and when she was told that he still breathed, she replied, 'Then no one else has the right to order me.' And she remained.

The Duc de Guise here interrupted the queen. "Pardon, madam," said he, "but I believe I know the king's intentions on this point," and without further preamble, he struck on a bell. A valet appeared. "Let Madame de Poitiers be told that the king wishes to see her," said the duke.

The young king, so far from being displeased at having the authority thus taken from him, was delighted that the duke acted for him.

"I hope I do not presume too much, sire," said the duke.

"No, uncle; I know that whatever you do, will be well done."

"And all that you say is well said," whispered Marie in her husband's ear, who coloured with pleasure, for, for an approving glance from her, he would have risked his whole kingdom.

Immediately after the valet announced La Duchesse de Valentinois, and Diana entered, evidently troubled, but still haughty.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

GABRIEL REVENGED.

Diana bowed slightly to the young king, still more slightly to Catherine and Marie, while she did not even seem to be aware of the presence of the duke.

"Sire," said she, "your majesty has sent for me."

The king, at once irritated and confused at the presence of the ex-favourite, hesitated, coloured, and at last said, "Our uncle of Guise will be kind enough to make known our intentions towards you, madam."

Diana turned haughtily towards the duke. "Madam," said he, "his majesty is aware of the profound grief which the king's death has caused you; he thanks you for it, and believes he will meet your desires by permitting you to quit the court and live in retirement. You can set off this evening."

Diana devoured a tear of rage and said, "His majesty divines my wishes; what more have I to do here? I am anxious to retire as soon as I can—believe me."

"All is for the best, then," replied the duke. "But, madam, your château of Anet, which you hold through the goodness of the late king, is doubtless too worldly and gay a retreat for a desolate mourner like you. Therefore Queen Catherine offers you in exchange her castle of Chaumont-sur-Loire, which is further from Paris, and more suitable to your future life. It will be at your disposal as soon as you wish."

Madame de Poitiers comprehended that this meant only an arbitrary confiscation, but how was she to resist, having no longer power or friends, so she yielded. "I shall be happy," she said, "to offer to

the queen the magnificent domain which I owe to her husband's generosity."

"I accept this reparation, madam," said Catherine, coldly, and with another grateful glance towards the duke. "My castle shall be prepared immediately for your reception."

"And there," said the duke, "you can continue the correspondence and conferences which you have so extensively carried on during the last week with the Constable Montmorency."

"I did not think, monsieur, that I was doing wrong in conferring with the greatest statesman and warrior of his majesty's reign, concerning the affairs of his kingdom."

"True," replied the implacable Catherine, "M. de Montmorency has filled with his glory and his labours two entire reigns, and it is full time, my son, that you should think of assuring to him the honourable retreat he has so well earned."

"M. de Montmorency," replied Diana, "expects, like myself, this return for his long services. He was with me when I was summoned to the king, and is doubtless waiting for me. I will return and announce to him your good intentions towards him, and he will, I doubt not, wait immediately on his majesty, and present to him his thanks and his adieux, and as he is a man, and one of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom, he will doubtless sooner or later find an opportunity of showing, better than by words, his profound gratitude to a king, who so reverences the past; and to the new counsellors who concur so willingly in the work of justice and public interest."

"The king is ready to receive M de Montmorency," replied Catherine, pale with indignation, "and to listen to what he has to say."

"I will send him," said Diana; and she retired with a haughty look, but bitter inward grief. Pride on her face, but death in her heart.

Catherine had remarked that M. de Guise had given no opinion concerning the constable, so she

said, "Madame de Poitiers is very impertinent about the constable, and it is certain that, if we leave him any authority, she will partake of it."

The duke was still silent: "My advice to your majesty," continued Catherine, "is, not to divide your confidence among many, but to choose for sole minister, either M. de Montmorency, your uncle Guise, or your uncle Bourbon—which you please. Is not this your opinion, M. de Guise?"

"Yes, madam, if it is yours."

"You should support my opinion, monsieur, which serves you; for the king knows well, that it is neither M. de Montmorency nor M. de Bourbon whom I desire to see his adviser."

"Madam," replied the duke, "believe in my profound gratitude and constant devotion."

"Well, then, when the deputies arrive, they will find us all in perfect unanimity."

"I am delighted at this good understanding," said the king; "and with my mother to advise me, and my uncle as minister, I begin to be reconciled to this royalty, which frightened me."

M. de Montmorency was now announced. He was at first calm and dignified, and, bowing respectfully to the king, said,—"Sire, I am not surprised to find that the old servant of your father and grandfather should find little favour with you. I do not complain of a reverse of fortune—that I expected—and I retire without a murmur. If ever my king or my country need my services again, I shall be found at Chantilly, ready to devote my life and property to your majesty."

This moderation touched the young king, who, more than ever embarrassed, turned towards his mother in his distress; but the Duc de Guise, who knew that his interference would soon change this moderation into anger, said,—

"Since M. de Montmorency retires, he will doubtless deliver up to the king the royal seal, of which we shall have need."

"Here it is," cried the constable, furiously, "and I

was about to do so without asking; but his majesty is, I see, surrounded by people disposed to counsel him to affront those who should be treated with gratitude."

"Of whom do you speak, monsieur?" said Catherine.

"Of those who surround his majesty," replied he, rudely.

Catherine waited for no more, but commenced a torrent of reproaches for the manner in which he had always behaved towards her, and paid court to the reigning favourite. The constable replied by a laugh, which was a new insult. However, the duke, who had meanwhile been talking to the king, now rose, and said, quietly,—

"Monsieur, your friends and followers, Bochetel, L'Aubespine, and the rest, and also Bertrandi, the keeper of the seals, will, doubtless, wish to follow you into your retirement; the king thanks them for their services, and dispenses with them for the future. As for M. de Coligny, your nephew, who is at once governor of Picardy and of the Ile de France, the king considers this double charge too much for him, and wishes to relieve him from the duties of one, whichever he may choose. Will you have the goodness to let him know this? As for yourself——"

"Oh! are you about to take away my constable's baton?"

"You know that is impossible, and also that your title of grand master is perpetual. But his majesty considers these incompatible with that of lieutenant-general of the kingdom, which you also hold, and which his majesty desires to confer upon me, who have no other title."

"Well, monsieur, is this all?" said the constable, grinding his teeth.

"Yes, I believe so."

The constable could scarcely repress his passion, but he would not give to his rival the satisfaction of seeing him still further disgraced as a rebel, so he bowed, and prepared to go; but, turning back, he

said,—"One word only, sire—one last duty to fulfil to the memory of your father. He who struck the fatal blow—the author of all our ills—was, perhaps, not simply unfortunate; at least, I have reason to think so. There was, perhaps, a criminal intention, for the man whom I accuse considered himself injured by the king, and your majesty will doubtless order a severe inquiry to be instituted."

The Duc de Guise trembled at this formal accusation against Gabriel; however, Catherine hastened to reply. "Know, monsieur," said she, "that it did not require your intervention to call our attention to this point, and the widow of Henry the Second can leave to no one the initiative in this matter. You may, therefore, be easy, monsieur."

"I have then nothing to add," and, half suffocated with rage, he went out.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

CHANGE OF TEMPERATURE.

THE deputies from the parliament found the most perfect accord at the Louvre. François the Second, having his wife at his right, and his mother at his left, presented to them the Duc de Guise, as lieutenant-general of the kingdom; the Cardinal de Lorraine, as superintendent of finance; and François Olivier, as keeper of the seals.

One of the deputies, thinking, doubtless, that a little clemency would grace the new reign, asked for pardon for Anne Dubourg; but he forgot what a zealous Catholic the new minister was, who, pretending to misunderstand what was said, replied,—"Yes, gentlemen, the trial of Anne Dubourg, and his fellow-accused, shall be quickly terminated. Do not be afraid."

When they were gone, François arose, fatigued, and said,—"We have done with business for to-day;

have we not? My mother—my uncle—may we not soon leave Paris for a little while, and go to finish the time of our mourning at Blois, on the banks of that Loire which Marie loves so much."

"Oh, yes!" cried Marie, "Paris is hateful on these fine summer days."

"M. de Guise will arrange about that," said Catherine; "but before leaving you to-day, my son, I have still a little more to say, and there still remains to you a sacred duty."

"What, madam?"

"That of justice. Your father died by a violent death, and he who struck him is either guilty or unfortunate. I myself lean to the former supposition, but, at all events, the question ought to be decided. If we allow such an action to pass without notice, without even inquiry, if it was voluntary, what dangers would not all kings run? An examination is, therefore, necessary."

"Then, madam, you wish to arrest M. de Montgomery?" said the duke.

"He was arrested this morning."

"Arrested! By whose orders?"

"By mine. I took this responsibility on myself. He might have fled at any moment, and it was important to prevent it. He has been brought to the Louvre, and I beg you, my son, to interrogate him." And she in her turn struck on the bell. "Bring in the prisoner," said she.

M. de Guise frowned, the king appeared undecided, and Marie Stuart unquiet. Gabriel entered, pale, but calm. The young king changed colour on seeing him, and said to his mother, "Speak for me, madam, if you please."

"Monsieur," said she to Gabriel, in a haughty tone, "we have summoned you before his majesty that he might interrogate you himself so as to learn your guilt or innocence. Are you prepared to answer?"

"I am ready to listen, madam."

"Singular circumstances speak against you, monsieur. Your long absences from Paris; your volun-

tary exile from the court for nearly two years, and your presence and mysterious attitude at the fatal tournay. How did it happen that you, so accustomed to these games, omitted to throw away your broken lance? Reply—what have you to say?"

"Nothing, madam."

"Nothing!" cried Catherine, astonished.

"No, madam."

"Then you confess?"

"I confess nothing."

"You deny, then?"

"I deny nothing, either; I am simply silent."

"Monsieur, take care. You would, perhaps, be wiser to try and defend yourself. Know that M. de Montmorency affirms that you had complaints against the king."

"Did he say what, madam?"

"No, but doubtless he will."

"Let him if he dare."

"Then you refuse to answer?"

"I do."

"Torture will, perhaps, change your resolution."

"I do not think so, madam."

"You are risking your life by this obstinacy, I warn you."

"I care not, madam; it is not worth keeping, and I shall not defend myself."

"You are right," cried Marie; "this silence is that of a noble gentleman who will not even deign to defend himself against suspicion, lest it should touch him in any way."

Catherine looked frowningly at her.

"Yes, I am, perhaps, wrong to speak so," said Marie; "but I speak as I think and feel; my heart will always speak, and I cannot repress its emotions; I have no politics but those of my instincts, and this instinct now tells me that M. de Montgomery did not coldly conceive and voluntarily execute such a crime, and that when he refuses to justify himself, it is because he holds himself above such a suspicion."

The young king looked with love and delight at his

darling speaking with so much eloquence and enthusiasm, and looking, while so doing, prettier than ever.

"Oh! thanks, madam," said Gabriel, "you speak like yourself."

"Have we done with this childish sentimentality?" said Catherine, angrily.

"No, madam," said Marie, who felt hurt; "if you have done with such feelings, we, who are young, are, thank God, just beginning them. Is it not true?" she added, turning towards her husband.

The king did not answer, but he kissed the pretty fingers which she held out to him.

"Oh!" cried Catherine, angrily, "I claim a right, and I am mocked in return. I asked only that the murderer of the king should be questioned, and when he refuses to answer, he is approved and praised. Well, then! I openly declare myself the accuser of M. de Montgomery. Will the king refuse justice to his mother because she is his mother? We will hear the constable, and the death of a king, traitorously assassinated, shall be avenged." Then turning to the duke, she said, "But you say nothing, M. le Duc, yet I am sure you agree with me."

"No, madam, I do not, and, therefore, I was silent."

"Ah! you also turn against me."

"I have for once this regret, madam. As far as concerned Madame de Poitiers and the constable, I joined you heartily; but as for M. de Montgomery, I cannot in conscience partake of your sentiments. It seems impossible to make a brave and loyal gentleman responsible for an accident. A trial would but result in his triumph and his accuser's shame; and as for the danger which you speak of to kings, it seems to me that it would be much greater if you were to let the world think this a premeditated act."

"High political maxims, doubtless."

"They seem to me true; and for these and other reasons I think we should request M. de Montgomery to excuse this arrest, which has happily, however, been kept secret, and send him away free and ho-

noured to-day as he was yesterday and will ever be."

"And what is your opinion, my son?"

A look from Marie took away all hesitation from the king, and he said, "I confess I agree with my uncle, madam."

"Then you betray the memory of your father."

"I respect it, on the contrary, madam. The first words which my father spoke after his wound, were to beg that M. de Montgomery should not be pursued, and he reiterated this order before his death. Permit his son to obey him."

"Then you begin by despising your mother and attending exclusively to others."

"I attend to the voice of my conscience, my mother," replied François, with more firmness than might have been expected from him.

"Is this your determination, François? Take care; if you begin by refusing your mother her first request, by being obstinate to her and docile to others, I shall occupy myself no longer with your affairs, but shall withdraw from you the counsels of my experience and devotion, and will go into retirement and abandon you, my son. Think of it well."

"We shall deplore this retreat, madam, but will learn to resign ourselves," said Marie.

"Good," replied Catherine. "As for him," pointing to Gabriel, "I shall find another time." And with a terrible glance in which might almost have been read all the future crimes of her life, she went out.

CHAPTER LXXX.

GABRIEL'S NEW ALLEGIANCE.

After her departure, there was a short silence. François was almost frightened at his own boldness, and Marie at the threatening look of Queen Catherine.

The duke was secretly pleased at so easily getting rid of so ambitious and dangerous an associate.

Gabriel was the first to speak: "Sire, and you, madam, and you, monseigneur," said he, "I thank you for your good and generous intentions towards an unfortunate wretch, abandoned of Heaven. But still I say, of what use is it to ward off danger and death from so sad and lost an existence as mine? My life is no longer useful to any one, not even to myself."

"Gabriel," said the duke, "your life has been glorious in the past, and doubtless will be again; you are a man of energy, and we who govern want such."

"And," said the king, "your former services authorise me to count on your future ones. War may break out again, and I would not wish that a moment of despair, whatever be the cause, should deprive us of a defender who I am sure is as loyal as brave."

Gabriel listened with surprise. "Yes," said he, "this unexpected goodness from you, who perhaps ought to hate me, changes my soul and my destiny. To you, sire—to you, madam and monseigneur, belong my life, which you have almost given to me; I am not ungrateful by nature, and your kindness touches me to the heart."

"All is quiet now, Gabriel," said the duke, "and it is better that for a time your name should not be brought forward. But in a year or two, I will demand for you from the king, your re-appointment as captain of the guard."

"It is not honours that I wish for, but occasions of being useful. You will think me ungrateful, if I say occasions of seeking death."

"Do not speak so, Gabriel; say only that you will be ready when the king calls for you."

"Wherever I may be, or wherever his majesty may wish to send me," replied Gabriel.

"That is enough."

"And I," said the king, "thank you for this promise, and will endeavour that you shall not repent it."

"Yes," said Marie, "our confidence shall equal your devotion."

Gabriel kissed the hands of the king and the queen, pressed that of the duke, and took leave. That night Gabriel, kneeling beside his father's tomb, cried, "Yes, doubtless, my father, I had sworn to punish your murderer, not only in his own life, but in that of his children; but are there not duties even more sacred than this oath? If you could speak, my father, I feel that you would tell me to lay aside my anger, and not to return confidence by treason."

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE CHILD KING AND QUEEN.

Six or seven months had passed. It was on the 27th of February that the court was, for the time, assembled at Blois. There had been a grand fête the evening before, and the young king and queen were talking it over.

"Really," said Marie, "I found all the amusements most delightful."

"Yes," replied François, "the ballet and the scenes were charming, but I found the sonnets and madrigals rather too long."

"Oh! they were so gallant and witty."

"But too perpetually adulatory. It is not very amusing to hear oneself praised for two or three hours—besides some of them were so interlarded with Latin, which I did not understand."

"But that is the fashion."

"Oh! you are so clever, Marie," sighed the young king; "you write verses and understand Latin so much better than I do."

"It is our recreation. You men are more occupied with action."

"Nevertheless, I should like to be as clever, even as my brother Charles."

"Talking of him, did you remark his part in the allegory of religion defended by the three virtues?"

"Yes; he was Charity."

"True; and did you notice how furiously he struck at the head of Heresy?"

"Yes; when he advanced amidst the flames, upon this serpent, he was almost mad with rage."

"And did not Heresy look like M. de Coligny?"

"Wonderfully. And then the devils carried him off."

"Yes, our uncle was delighted at that, and your mother smiled a smile that almost frightened me. But did she not look handsome yesterday? Her dress was magnificent."

"Yes, mignonne, and I have sent to Constantinople for one like it for you."

"Oh! thanks, dear François, I do not certainly envy our sister, Elizabeth of England, who, they say, never puts a dress on twice; but I do not like that any woman in France, even your mother, should be better dressed than I."

"At all events you will always be the most beautiful. You looked like an angel last night, and your dancing was perfect. I saw no one but you—I love no one but you. Had you been only a simple peasant, I should have preferred you to all the queens in the world."

"And I, had you been a simple page, would have given you my heart. But we must not forget the important business we have to settle."

"Business!"

"Yes," replied Marie, gravely, "my uncle charges us to decide the colours for the dress of the Swiss Guards."

"Well, let us deliberate. What is the opinion of your majesty on this difficult question?"

"Oh, I will only speak after you. What do you say?"

"It is not easy to decide, and you will not assist me. The first colour——"

"Must be white—that of France."

"Then the second must be blue, for Scotland."

"Well—and the third?"

"Yellow."

"No; that is Spain. Green would be better."

"That is the colour of the Guises."

"Well, monsieur, is that a reason for excluding it?"

"No; but will these three colours harmonise?"

"Oh! an idea. We will take red, the Swiss colour; that will recall their country to the poor fellows."

"An idea as excellent as your heart, Marie."

At this moment the door opened quickly, and the Cardinal de Lorraine entered, pale and out of breath, followed by the duke, more calm, but as serious.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

REVOLT.

"WHAT! M. le Cardinal," cried François, "can I not have a moment's peace even here?"

"Sire, I regret to disobey your majesty's commands, but the affair which brings us is too important to suffer delay."

"Speak, then."

"Sire, a conspiracy against your majesty has just been discovered. Your days are no longer in safety here, and you must leave at once."

"A conspiracy! Leave Blois! What does this mean?"

"It means, sire, that wicked people attack your crown and life."

"What! they wish to injure me—so young—so recently king? I, who voluntarily and knowingly have never injured any one. Who are these people, monsieur?"

"Who should they be, but these cursed heretics."

"Again the heretics! Are you sure, monsieur, that you are not led away by unjust suspicions?"

"Unhappily there is no doubt this time."

"What have I done that my people should not love me?"

"I have just informed your majesty that it was the Huguenots?"

"But they are not the less French. Really, M. le Cardinal, I delegated to you my power, in hopes to make my people bless me, and I hear of nothing but troubles and discontent."

"Oh, sire!" cried Marie, reproachfully.

"It is not just, sire, to make me responsible for the misfortunes of the times," said the cardinal.

"Nevertheless, monsieur, I would know a little more of what is passing, that I may learn whether it is of you or me that they complain."

"Oh, your majesty!" cried Marie, again.

The king stopped, fearing he had gone too far. The duke never spoke, but after a pause the cardinal said, in a constrained tone, "Sire, since we have the grief of seeing our efforts misunderstood, there only remains for us to retire and leave our places to others, worthier or more fortunate. Your majesty has then but to decide who is to succeed us. As to my office, there will be no difficulty; your majesty has only to choose between M. Olivier, M. le Cardinal de Tournou, and M. de l'Hôpital."

Marie, full of grief, hid her face in her hands. François, repentant, wished his words unsaid, but did not dare to speak.

"But," continued the cardinal, "to replace my brother is much more difficult, and I scarcely know who can pretend to it. M. de Bussac, perhaps——"

"Bussac, who is always scolding—impossible!"

"Then there is M. de Montmorency——"

"Oh! he is too old, and I have not forgotten his behaviour when I was dauphin. But why do you omit my relations—the Prince de Condé, for example?"

"Sire, I regret to tell your majesty, that among

the names of the chiefs of this conspiracy, that of M. de Condé stands first."

"Is it possible?"

"Sire, it is certain."

"It is, then, a serious plot?"

"It is a revolt, sire; and since your majesty discharges us from the terrible responsibility which weighed on us, I beg you to name our successors without delay, for, in a few days, the Protestants will be under the walls of Blois."

"What!" cried Marie, terrified.

"Are the rebels numerous?" asked the king.

"I hear, about 2000 men."

"And it is in such a situation that you would abandon me."

"I thought it was your majesty's desire."

"Oh, I was sad to hear that I had such enemies. But think of it no more, and tell me what can be done."

"Sire, if your majesty feels confidence in us——"

"Entire confidence, monsieur."

"There has been much time lost," said the duke. They were his first words, but he now advanced, and continued, "Sire, 2000 insurgents, commanded by the Baron de la Renaudie, and secretly supported by the Prince de Condé, are about to make a descent from Poitou, Bearn, and other provinces, and endeavour to carry off your majesty from this castle of Blois."

François made a movement of surprise and indignation.

"Carry off the king!" cried Marie.

"And you with him, madam. But make yourself easy, we are watching."

"But what shall you do?" asked the king.

"We only learned this an hour ago. But the first thing to do, sire, is to make your person safe. You must at once leave this city, which is defenceless, and retire to Amboise, where the castle is fortified."

"What!" said Marie, "shut us up in that castle, which is so sombre and triste!"

"Madam, it must be."

"Then we fly before these rebels."

"Sire, one cannot fly before an enemy who has not declared war. We are supposed to be ignorant of all this. I only trust they will follow you to Amboise."

"Why so?"

"Because it will be an occasion to strike a decisive blow, and finishing with them once for all."

"Alas! it is still civil war."

"We must, however, meet them, and punish them, sire. This is my plan. Beyond retiring from Blois, let us give them no intimation of our knowledge of their designs, but feign perfect ignorance and security, and when they advance to surprise us, it will be we, on the contrary, who will surprise and seize them. Therefore, I pray you, madam, to show no alarm or intention to fly. I will take care that everything is ready, but in secret."

"What hour is fixed for our departure?" asked the king, with a resigned air.

"Three o'clock, sire. I have had everything prepared beforehand."

"Beforehand?"

"Yes, sire, for I felt sure that your majesty would yield to reason."

"Well, we will be ready."

"I thank your majesty for your confidence in us, and now we must pray you to excuse us, for we have much to do."

They bowed and retired. Then the young king and queen looked sadly at each other. "Well, ma mie?" said he.

"Is it not tiresome?"

At this moment Madame Dazette, the queen's woman-in-waiting, entered

"Is it true, madam, that we are to move at once?"

"Too true, Madame Dazette."

"But madam, do you know that the castle of Amboise is not fit to receive you; that there is not even a mirror perfect?"

"Then we must take all with us. Write at once a list of necessary things,—I will dictate. First, my new dress of crimson damask with gold trimmings——" Then, turning to the king, "Will you not also, sire, occupy yourself with what you will require?"

"No, I shall leave that to Aubert; I am too much grieved."

"I am sure I am not less so. Madame Dazette, put down my fardingale of violet and gold, and my robe of white and silver; also my dressing gown of silver cloth trimmed with lynx fur. It is centuries, is it not, sire, since the old castle of Amboise has been inhabited by the court?"

"Since the reign of Charles the Eighth, I do not believe any king has been there for more than two or three days."

"And who knows if we shall not be there a whole month? Oh! these wretched Huguenots. Do you think, Madame Dazette, that the bed chambers will be decently furnished?"

"I do not know, madam; but the safest plan will be to take everything with us."

"Then put down my mirror, framed in gold, my dressing-case of violet velvet, and the velvet carpet to surround the bed. But, sire, did you ever hear of subjects attacking their king, and driving him away in this manner?"

"Never, I think, Marie," replied François, sadly. "They have sometimes resisted him, but to attack him just——"

"Well! we cannot take too many precautions. Madame Dazette, a dozen pairs of shoes, pillow-cases and sheets. Is that all? Really I can hardly think. Oh! my velvet pelisse—the gold taper stand—I cannot think of anything else.——"

"Will not your majesty take your jewels?"

"Oh! yes. Leave them here, they might fall into the hands of these people. I think I have omitted nothing important, Madame Dazette."

"Madam thinks, I trust, of her book of prayers."

"Ah, you remind me of it. Take the handsomest—the one my uncle gave me, bound in scarlet velvet and gold. Madame Dazette, you must look after everything—we are so absorbed by this cruel necessity——"

"What about the lackeys and attendants, your majesty?"

"Oh! let them wear their undress liveries. Now, you may go, Dazette."

Dazette curtseyed, and went towards the door.

"Oh! Dazette," cried Marie, "be sure that they take their state liveries with them."

"Am I not right, sire?" said Marie, when they were alone. "One must think a little of appearances—one must not be too much humiliated by these Huguenots. Indeed, I hope we can give a fête at Amboise—oh! do not shake your head, sire; we will show them that we do not fear them, and I am sure that a ball would be excellent policy, as your mother would say."

CHAPTER LXXXIII

TWO APPEALS.

Since we last saw Gabriel, he had led a retired and lonely life. He—formerly the man of action and energy—now delighted in solitude and oblivion. He never showed himself at court: and, young in years, seemed old through sorrow. He often regretted that the king and queen had placed themselves between him and the anger of Catherine. At times, however, his youth seemed to assert itself, and he longed for war to employ his energies again. Meanwhile, he studied assiduously various books of religious controversy, and became thoroughly convinced by and enthusiastic for the great principles revealed by Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and Theodore de Béze, and he often longed to give his life for this good cause.

On the 6th of March, he was sitting meditating as usual, when Aloyse brought in a messenger, booted, spurred, and muddy, as after a long journey. This courier had come from Amboise, bearing letters from the Duc de Guise. Gabriel opened his, and read,—

"My dear Gabriel,—I write hastily, and have no time to explain. You told us—the king and I—that you were devoted to us, and that when we had need of you, we had but to call. We call to-day. Set off at once for Amboise, where the king and queen now are, and I will tell you on your arrival how you can serve us. Of course you will be free to act or not; but come at once, and you will be, as ever, welcome. Yours affectionately, "FRANÇOIS DE LORRAINE."

The messenger had left while Gabriel was reading.

"Aloyse," said Gabriel, "tell André to prepare my valise, and get my horse saddled."

"You are going away, monsieur?"

"Yes; in two hours."

Soon after, another messenger arrived, and asked to see the count. Gabriel trembled on recognising the man who had formerly brought him a letter from La Renaudie. He had in fact brought him another, which began as follows:—

"Friend and Brother,—I wished to see you before leaving Paris, but my time was short, and I could not press your hand and tell you our hopes and projects. We know, however, that you are one of us, and that with you there is no need of preparation, but that a word is enough. This word is, that we have need of you. We know you are not pledged to us, but still, come to Noizai, where one of us will meet you.

"L. R."

"P.S. If you meet any of our troops, give the words, 'Genève,' and 'Gloire de Dieu.'"

"What does this mean?" thought Gabriel. "These opposite appeals—each calling me nearly to the same

place. I am under obligations to both, and to both I will go; however difficult may be my position, at least I will not be a traitor."

An hour after he set off.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

A PERILOUS CONFIDENCE.

GABRIEL entered the presence of the Duc de Guise, if possible paler and sadder than ever, for a few words which he had heard from some of the guards had given him some insight into the state of affairs. The king had been so good to him, and the party to whom he was devoted being in open revolt against him, Gabriel's mind was distracted by different feelings.

"Well, Gabriel," said the duke, "you know now, I dare say, why I sent for you?"

"I suspect; but do not know exactly, monseigneur."

"The Huguenots are in open revolt—they are coming to attack us in this castle."

"It is a sad and dreadful extremity," said Gabriel, thinking of his own situation.

"My friend, it is a magnificent occasion."

"What do you mean, monseigneur?"

"I mean that the Huguenots think to surprise us, and that we are prepared for them. Their plans are discovered—their projects betrayed. They have begun the war, and they will be delivered over to our swords—they are lost, I tell you."

"Good heavens!" cried Gabriel.

"We know all the details of their mad enterprise. On the 16th, at noon, they are to unite in the city, and attack us. They have friends in the king's guards—they will be changed. These friends were to have opened the west door to them—it will be guarded. Then their forces are to arrive secretly through the paths of the forest of Château-Regnault

—the royal troops will fall on these detached parties as they arrive, so that the half of their forces will never reach Amboise."

"How do you know all this?"

"Two of their own men have denounced them—the one for money, and the other through fear. The first, whom you doubtless know, is the Marquis——"

"Do not tell me," cried Gabriel; "I did not mean to ask. It is so difficult for a man of honour not to betray traitors."

"Oh!" said the duke, in some surprise, "we have full confidence in you, Gabriel. I was speaking of you yesterday to the queen and she was pleased that I had sent for you."

"And why did you send for me?"

"Why! Because the king has few devoted and sure servants, and we want you to command a detachment against the rebels."

"Against the rebels! impossible!"

"Impossible! and why? I am not accustomed to hear that word from you, Gabriel."

"Monseigneur, I am of their religion."

The duke started back, with a frightened surprise.

"It is so," continued Gabriel, sadly. "When it shall please you, monseigneur, to send me against the English or Spaniards you know I shall not draw back, and that I will give my life with joy; but in a civil war—in a religious war against my countrymen, my brothers—I am obliged to decline."

"You a Huguenot!" cried the duke.

"Yes, and a firm one. I have faith in the new ideas, and have given my soul to them."

"And at the same time your sword, doubtless," said the duke, bitterly.

"No, monseigneur."

"What! you mean to tell me that you were ignorant of the designs of your brothers, as you call them, and that these brothers renounce the aid of a champion like you."

"They must."

"Then you will desert them, for your new faith places you between two desertions."

"No, monseigneur."

"How will you arrange then?"

"Monseigneur, my opinion is that the more I am in a false position the more it behoves me to be perfectly straightforward and sincere. I declared some time ago to the Protestants that sacred obligations to the king, queen, and yourself would prevent me from fighting in their ranks—if it came to fighting. They knew that reform was for me a religion, and not a party, and I have stipulated always for freedom of action. To them as to you I have the right to refuse my assistance; in this sad conflict between my gratitude and my religion my heart will bleed at every stroke, but by remaining neuter I trust to remain honest."

The duke, now calmed down a little, could not but admire the frankness and noble spirit of his old companion in arms. "You are a strange man, Gabriel," said he.

"Why strange, monseigneur? I was ignorant, I swear to you, of this conspiracy; however I have, I confess, received since your summons a letter from one of them, saying simply, 'Come.' I foresaw partly the hard alternative in which I should be placed, but still I came. I came to say to you, I cannot fight against my brothers in religion; and I meant to say to them, I cannot fight against those who spared my life."

The duke held out his hand to the young man. "I was wrong," said he; "but you may imagine my annoyance at finding you among our enemies."

"Your enemy I never can be, monseigneur, and I trust that, although a Huguenot, you still have faith in me, and in case of a foreign war would still call me."

"Yes, Gabriel; while I deplore the separation between us, I shall ever trust in you, and to prove it

to you, take this," and sitting down, he wrote an order to leave Amboise whenever he pleased. "With this you are safe, and it is no small mark of confidence, Gabriel."

"And this I refuse, monseigneur."

"How! Why?"

"Monseigneur, do you know where I should go on leaving here?"

"That is your business, and I do not ask."

"But I will tell you. I should go among the rebels at Noizai."

"At Noizai! Castlenau commands there."

"Oh! you know everything, monseigneur."

"And what would you do at Noizai?"

"What? Say, here I am, you called me, but I can do nothing for you. And I may not warn them of the snare into which they are about to fall—your confidence forbids me. So, monseigneur, keep me a prisoner here, and save me from this cruel trial."

"I cannot do that, Gabriel; I trust you."

"Then, monseigneur, I implore you—by all I have ever done and suffered—one other favour."

"What is it? I will grant it if I can."

"You can—you even ought; for after all, they are Frenchmen, with whom you are about to fight. Permit me to dissuade them from their fatal project—not by revealing its certain issue—but by entreaties."

"Take care, Gabriel," said the duke, solemnly; "if a word escape you of our plans, and the reformers persist in their design—only altering the execution of it—it will be the king and queen who will be lost. Think of it well. Then if you pass your word not to let them even suspect my knowledge of their plans."

"I promise on my honour as a gentleman."

"Go then, and do your best to induce them to renounce their criminal designs, and I will renounce my certain victory, remembering that it is French blood I spare."

"For them and for myself I thank you, monseigneur."

A quarter of an hour after he was en route for Noizai.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

THE DISLOYALTY OF LOYALTY.

THANKS to the instructions of La Renaudie, Gabriel arrived safely at Noizai, which was to be the rallying place for the 16th. It was now the afternoon of the 15th.

He was met by the Baron de Castlenau, a valiant and generous young man, who had the command of this post. "Here you are, M. de Montgomery," said he, "although I hardly expected you, for I knew that you had said that during the reign of François the Second your sword could not belong to us."

"M. de la Renaudie did not mention in his letter what you wanted me for."

"No, and he has charged me to unfold to you our designs and hopes." Castlenau then repeated to Gabriel all that he had already heard from the Duc de Guise, and he saw with terror how fearfully correctly the duke had been informed.

"Now you know all," said Castlenau; "can you help us?"

"I cannot," said Gabriel, with a sigh.

"Well! we are not the less friends; and we are sure of victory."

"Are you quite sure of it."

"Perfectly. The enemy suspects nothing, and will be taken by surprise. We had some fear when the court removed from Blois, for they evidently had some suspicions."

"No doubt of it."

"Yes, but instead of injuring, this change will

serve us. The Duc de Guise now believes himself in perfect safety, and we have friends in the place who will open the west door to us when we present ourselves. Our success is certain."

"The event often disappoints sanguine hopes."

"But here it cannot—to-morrow will see the triumph of our party."

"Suppose treason——" said Gabriel, with a heart full of grief.

"Impossible. None but the chiefs are in the secret, and they are all incapable of it. I believe, M. de Montgomery, that you are envious of us, that you persist in auguring ill to our enterprise."

"Yes, it is true, I do envy you."

"I was sure of it," laughed the young man.

"Yet, seriously, you have some confidence in me?"

"Seriously, the greatest."

"Will you listen to good advice?"

"What is it?"

"Renounce your design for to-morrow—send off messengers immediately to say the design has failed, or at least must be adjourned."

"But, why?" asked Castlenau, who began to take alarm; "you must have some reason for speaking thus."

"Mon Dieu, no."

"Oh! you would not advise me, without a reason, to abandon so brilliant a stroke."

"No, it is not without a reason, but I cannot divulge it to you. Will you not believe me on my simple word?"

"Listen, monsieur; if I take on myself this strange resolution to turn back at the last moment, I shall be responsible to all our chiefs. May I refer them to you?"

"Yes."

"And you will tell them the motives which induced you to advise such a step?"

"Alas! I cannot."

"How, then, can I yield? Would they not cruelly reproach me for having thus, at a word, destroyed all their hopes? Whatever confidence we have in you, you are but a man, and may be deceived."

"Then take care, baron, you take on yourself the responsibility of all that may prove fatal in this affair."

Castlenau was struck with the tone of these words. "M. de Montgomery," said he, with a sudden enlightenment, "I believe I guess the truth: you have been told or have surmised a secret which you are forbidden to reveal, and you know something fatal to the issue of our enterprise. We have been betrayed —have we not?"

"I did not say so."

"Or else you have seen the Duc de Guise, who is your friend; and he, not knowing you to be a Huguenot, told you his plans."

"I gave you no reason to think so."

"Or else, in passing through Amboise, you have discovered preparations—heard something; in fact, our plot is discovered."

"Have I said so?"

"No, count, for I see you are pledged to secrecy Therefore I ask you no longer for any positive assurance—not even a word; but, if I am right, a gesture, even your silence will suffice."

Gabriel, full of anxiety, remembered his promise to the duke, not to let what he knew even be suspected, and remained buried in thought.

"You are silent," cried Castlenau. "I understand, and shall act accordingly."

"What will you do, then?"

"Warn the other chiefs immediately, that some one in whom we have confidence has denounced to me a probable treason."

"But I have not done so."

"No, but I understand you, nevertheless, and you have saved us. Once on our guard, all will go badly for them, and well for us. We will adjourn our en-

terprise to a safer time. We will seek for our traitors, we will redouble our precautions, and some day, when everything is favourable, we will renew our attempt, and thanks to you, we shall succeed."

"But that is just what I want to avoid," cried Gabriel, with terror, seeing himself on the brink of an involuntary treason. "The real reason, M. de Castlenau, of my advice and warnings, is, that I think your enterprise guilty and dangerous. By attacking the Catholics, you give them right on their side; you justify reprisals, and from the oppressed, become rebels. If you have to complain of the ministers, should you therefore attack the young king? Oh, let your principles fight for you, but do not shed blood. Let me entreat you to abstain from civil war, which but retards the ultimate triumph of our cause."

"Is this really the motive of your warnings?"

"Yes," said Gabriel, in a hollow voice.

"Then," said Castlenau, coldly, "I thank you for your intentions, but must not the less act according to my orders, and if you will allow me, I will leave you to give the necessary directions."

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

Gabriel did not leave the castle of Noizai, but determined to pass the night there, as at all events his presence would be a pledge of his good faith. Castlenau left him perfectly free, but took no notice of him.

With the earliest morning the troops of the Huguenots began to assemble in small parties, and by eleven all was ready. Gabriel knew none of the chiefs, as La Renaudie was not present, but was to come through the forest of Château-Regnault

Castlenau, who in his joy pardoned Gabriel, said to him, "Well, M. le Comte, you see you were wrong, and that all goes well; all our people have arrived, and even more than we expected, and have met with no opposition on the road——"

The baron was interrupted by a sound of trumpets, arms, and a great tumult.

"That must be the arrival of more reinforcements," cried he; "doubtless La Motte and Deschamps, with the troops from Picardy. They were not to have arrived till to-morrow, but they must have made a forced march—the brave fellows—to have their share in the combat. Come, M. le Comte, from this gallery we can see."

Gabriel followed, as pale as death, but when Castlenau arrived where he could command a view of the field, he uttered a great cry, and stood as if petrified. It was not the Huguenot troops, but the royal ones under the command of Jacques de Savoie, Duc de Nemours. Under cover of the woods, which surrounded the castle, they had arrived secretly, and came suddenly on the terrace where the advanced guard of the rebels was drawn up ready to march. They, taken by surprise, did not even resist, and Castlenau arrived only to see them give up their swords to the victors. He could not believe his eyes, but remained thunderstruck and motionless. Gabriel, less surprised, was not less overwhelmed.

As they stood thus, an ensign entered precipitately. "M. le Baron!" cried he, "they have carried the drawbridge and the first door; we have closed the second, but it cannot hold for a quarter of an hour. Shall we resist or negotiate?"

"I will come," said Castlenau.

Gabriel followed him. "What shall you do, my friend?" said he.

"I do not know. One can always die."

"Alas! why did you not believe me yesterday?"

"Yes, you were right, I see. You foresaw all this—perhaps knew it beforehand."

"Yes, and that is my greatest distress. But reflect,

Castlenau, that I had passed my word of honour that I would neither directly nor indirectly allow you to suspect the truth."

"Then you were right to be silent. It is I who was mad. I should have known that a brave man does not argue against war without powerful motives. But a will expiate my fault—I will die."

"And I with you, then.

"You! and why?"

"I will not fight—I am pledged not to do so; but my life is burdensome to me, and I will go without arms. I will not kill, but I shall be killed."

"It must not be so—I do not wish to drag you to death with me."

"Why not? You are going to drag with you all who are shut in here, and my life is far more useless than theirs."

"I cannot do otherwise for the glory of our cause, than demand this sacrifice from them. Martyrs are often more useful to a cause than conquerors."

"Yes, but is it not your first duty, as a commander, to try and save the troops entrusted to you?"

"Then you advise me——?"

"To try pacific measures. If you resist, you cannot escape defeat and massacre—if you yield, it appears to me, that they cannot punish very severely a design which was never executed."

"I regret not to have taken your advice before, but I will do so now. Yet it is repugnant to me to draw back."

"To draw back, you must have advanced. Who, until now, can prove you rebellious? My presence here may perhaps still be useful to you. May I try to save you?"

"What will you do?"

"Nothing unworthy, you may be satisfied. I will go to the Duc de Nemours and tell him that you will open the doors, if he will engage to hold you and yours harmless, and will conduct you to the king to explain your wrongs, and then set you free."

"But if he refuse?"

"Then the wrong is on his side. If he refuses, Castlenau, I will return and die with you."

"Do you think Renaudie would consent if he were here?"

"On my honour, I believe any reasonable man would."

"Then do as you will."

"Thanks, I trust to succeed and save many noble lives."

Gabriel then went down, and, with a flag in his hand, advanced towards the duke, who was on horseback waiting to hear whether there was to be peace or war. After a short interview, Gabriel returned with the following written lines:—

"M. de Castlenau and his companions, having consented immediately to lay down their arms, I the undersigned Jacques de Savoie, have sworn on my faith as a prince—on my honour and my salvation—that I will leave them safe and sound, and that fifteen of them, of whom M. de Castlenau shall be one, shall be taken to the king at Amboise, to make their peaceful remonstrances.

"Given at the Château de Noizai, 16th March, 1560. "JACQUES DE SAVOIE."

"Thanks, my friend," said Castlenau; "you have saved both life and honour."

But Gabriel still looked sad. "I think," said he, "of La Renaudie and the others who were to attack to-night. I fear it is too late to save them. Still I might try. He comes through the forest?"

"Yes, you might meet him, and save him as you have done us."

"I will try at all events. We will meet at Amboise."

Castlenau and his companions followed the Duc de Nemours confident and trustful, but, immediately on their arrival, they were thrown into prison, to wait, as was said, the result of the attack.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

THE FOREST OF CHATEAU-REGNAULT.

The forest of Château-Regnault was not more than a league and a half from Noizai, and Gabriel went there at full gallop; but when he arrived, he wandered about for an hour and an half without meeting friend or foe. At last he heard the regular tramp of cavalry; he rode in the direction of the sound, and found it to be the royal troops. He recognised their commander, the Baron de Pardaillau, a young and brave officer, who had served with him in Italy.

"Ah! M. de Montgomery," said he, "I thought you were at Noizai."

"I come from there."

"Tell me what has passed."

Gabriel recounted all that had taken place and its peaceful termination.

"Pardieu!" cried Pardaillau, "I should like to have the same good fortune. Do you know, M. de Montgomery, that I am marching against La Renaudie, my cousin, friend, and companion in arms. It is hard to have to fight against those who have fought at our sides."

"True, but you are not sure of meeting him."

"Alas! my orders are but too precise, and those who have betrayed him have given too particular instructions. In a quarter of an hour, I shall be in the place where I shall meet him."

"But if you did not go there."

"I should fail in my duty as a soldier. Besides, I could not do so, if I would, for my lieutenants have instructions as well as myself. No, my only hope is, that Renaudie will surrender to me—a small one, certainly, for he is brave and proud, and he cannot be surprised here, as Castlenau was. Will you aid me, M. de Montgomery, to bring about peace?"

"I will do my best."

"To the devil with these civil wars."

They walked along for some time in silence, when, as they turned into an avenue, Pardaillau said, "We must now be near—how my heart beats! For the first time in my life, I believe I am afraid."

They advanced silently and cautiously, and soon they thought they saw the glitter of arms through the trees, and a voice almost immediately cried, "Who goes there?"

"It is Renaudie's voice," said Pardaillau, and he replied, "Valois and Lorraine!"

Renaudie and his troop were now in sight. They halted, and Renaudie advanced a few steps, and Pardaillau did the same.

"If I am not mistaken," said Renaudie, "that is my dear Pardaillau."

"Yes, my poor Renaudie, and as a brother, I beg of you to renounce your enterprise, and lay down your arms."

"Really!" said Renaudie, ironically.

"Yes," said Gabriel, advancing, "it is the advice of a friend, I swear to you. Castlenau has surrendered to M. de Nemours this morning, and if you do not follow his example, you are lost."

"Ah! M. de Montgomery, and are you also one of them?"

"I am not with them—I stand between you."

"I did not mean to offend you, count; I cannot doubt you."

"Believe me then, and do not risk a useless and fatal combat."

"Impossible!"

"But know," said Pardaillau, "that we are only a small advanced guard."

"And I, do you think that I have only this handful of brave fellows to rely on?"

"I warn you that you have traitors in your camp, and I undertake to procure your pardon from M. de Guise."

"My pardon! I trust rather to give than to receive pardon."

"Renaudie, Renaudie, you will not make me turn my sword against you—my old playmate."

"It must be, Pardaillau—I cannot yield the field."

"You are wrong, Renaudie," said Gabriel; but he was suddenly interrupted, for the troops were growing impatient at this long parley, and one of the Huguenots fired a pistol at one of the king's men.

"It was without my orders," said Renaudie, "but never mind, the die is cast. Come! my friends—forward!"

The action commenced. Gabriel had his plume carried off, and his horse killed under him, and he drew a little to one side and looked mournfully on. The Huguenots, inferior in numbers and discipline, were fast giving way. When Renaudie found himself near Pardaillau—"Here!" cried he, "let me die at least by your hand."

"Ah!" cried Pardaillau, "he who kills the other will be the most generous."

They attacked each other, and for some time fought without advantage to either, but at last Renaudie's sword entered Pardaillau's breast. Renaudie uttered a cry of despair, but at the same moment Pardaillau's page fired at him and wounded him mortally. Round their dead bodies the fight raged fiercely for a short time longer, but the Huguenots were at last overpowered. Numbers of them were killed—some made prisoners—and the rest put to flight.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

THE TUMULT AT AMBOISE.

Still a large number of the conspirators had not been warned, but continued their way towards Amboise for the attack which had been arranged for that night, where, as we know, they were expected. The young king would not go to bed, but, uneasy and restless,

paced up and down his room. The queen, the duke, and the cardinal were with him.

"What a long night!" said the king "I suffer—my head is on fire—and the dreadful pains in my ears begin again to torture me."

"Oh!" cried Marie, "do not agitate yourself so much, I pray. You augment the pain of your body by that of your mind. Let me beg you to take some minutes of repose."

"How can I repose, Marie, while my people rebel, and arm themselves against me? Ah! all these cares will surely abridge the little life that God has granted to me."

Marie could only reply with her tears.

"Do not agitate yourself so much, sire," said the duke; "have we not made a happy commencement—Castlenau a prisoner, and Renaudie dead?"

"Oh! very happy," cried the king.

So the night passed. Then six o'clock struck and day began to appear. "Really," said the king, "I begin to hope that the Huguenots are not coming."

"So much the worse," said the duke, "for we should have crushed this rebellion." But as he spoke, they heard cries of "To arms." "Here they are," cried he; "sire, rely on me," and he rushed from the room.

The king grew more agitated than ever. "I can scarcely believe in so much audacity," said he. "Such an affront to the crown."

"Good heavens!" cried Marie, as the firing was heard.

A terrible explosion followed, and tumultuous cries.

"I believe," said François, "that the rebels have scaled the walls."

"Will your majesty not retire to a safer part of the castle?" said the cardinal, who was trembling with fear.

"I—I hide from my subjects? Let them come in if they dare."

"Sire," said Marie, "for heaven's sake, be prudent."

"No, Marie, I do not move."

The time passed, and the firing grew nearer. The king wrung his hands with anger.

"Oh!" cried Marie, "no one comes to tell us anything."

"This suspense is intolerable!" exclaimed the king; "I would rather go out myself."

"Oh! François, do not think of it, ill as you are."

"I feel ill no longer."

"Stay, sire, I am sure the noise lessens; the firing seems further of."

At this moment a page entered. "Sire, I am sent by the duke to announce that the rebels are in retreat."

"Oh! I thought it was nothing," said the cardinal.

"How quickly your courage has revived, uncle."

A second loud explosion made the cardinal tremble again, but immediately after Captain Richelieu entered, sword in hand, and his face black with powder. "Sire," said he, "the rebels have taken flight, and had just time to explode, without hurting us, a mass of powder which they had placed near one of the doors. Those who have not been taken or killed, have repassed the bridge, and have barricaded themselves in a house in the Faubourg du Vendomois, where they will be an easy prey. Your majesty may see from this window."

The king ran to the window, followed by the queen and cardinal.

"Yes, I see them besieged in turn!" cried he. "But what do I see? Smoke issuing from the house!"

"Yes, sire, we have set it on fire."

"Capital!" cried the cardinal. "See, sire, how they jump from the window. Do you hear their cries?"

"Poor people!" cried Marie, clasping her hands; "see! the flames increase, the house will fall on them."

"It falls!" cried the king.

"Oh! let us quit the place, sire; it makes me ill," said Marie.

"Yes, I pity them now."

The duke now entered, calm and proud, "Sire, all is finished," said he, "and the rebels have paid the penalty of their crime. I thank God for having delivered your majesty from this peril—greater than I thought at first, for it seems that we had traitors amongst us."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, sire. At the first assault, the Huguenots were aided by the men-at-arms under La Motte, who attacked us behind; thus they were masters for a short time."

"It is frightful!" cried Marie, pressing against the king.

"It would have been far more so, madam, had the rebels been aided, as they expected, by an attack that Chaudieu was to have made on another door."

"Then this attack failed?"

"It never took place, madam. Captain Chaudieu fortunately was not in time, and will arrive only to see his friends destroyed; and in order to greet him, I have ordered them to hang twenty or thirty of the men from the battlements of the castle."

"Let us now go to the chapel," said the king, "and return thanks for our deliverance."

"And afterwards," said the cardinal, "we will decide upon the punishment of the surviving criminals Sire, you will be present with the queen?"

"But—— Is that necessary?"

"It is indispensable, sire. Your glorious grandfather, Francis the First, always assisted at the burning of heretics. As for the King of Spain——"

"Other kings do as they please, and so will I."

"We rely on your presence, sire; your majesty cannot be absent."

"Mon Dieu! we will speak of this another time. The accused are not condemned yet."

"Sire, they are."

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

THE EXECUTION.

Although the conspirators had inserted in their manifestos a protestation that they would attempt nothing against the king, the princes of the blood, or the safety of the kingdom, yet they had been taken in open revolt, and the proceedings against them were pushed by the cardinal with a truly ecclesiastical if not Christian earnestness. They dispensed with vain formalities for the lesser criminals whom they hung daily at Amboise, without troubling the Parliament. The forms of justice were only granted to people of some quality and renown. At last, thanks to this pious zeal, all was concluded in less than three weeks. The 15th April was fixed for the public execution at Amboise of twenty-seven barons, eleven counts, and seven marquises. They neglected nothing to give this singular religious ceremony all possible éclat and pomp.

Immense preparations were made. From Paris to Nantes, they stimulated public curiosity by the means in use at that period, that is to say, announcing it from the pulpit. Three elegant stands, of which the centre one—the most sumptuous—was reserved for the royal family, were placed at the foot of the erection where the bloody spectacle was to take place. All around, benches and seats were occupied by the faithful from the neighbourhood; even those who did not wish to attend were driven to it by menaces and bribery, so that, on the eve of the fatal day, more than ten thousand people had been forced to encamp in the fields. Early in the morning even the roofs were covered, and windows were let at enormous prices.

A vast scaffold, covered with black, had been raised, and the place was guarded by the troops. After a

solemn mass in the Chapel St. Florentin, they led out the condemned, several of whom had already undergone torture. Catholic priests were in attendance, who endeavoured to induce them to renounce their religion, but they all refused even to reply.

The king and queen had with much difficulty been persuaded to appear at the last to witness the execution of the principal chiefs. Poor crowned slaves, they had been frightened into it.

At noon the execution commenced. As the first ascended the steps of the scaffold, his companions sang a psalm loudly, as well to encourage him as to mark their constancy. A verse accompanied each head that fell, although each made a voice the less to join. At one o'clock there only remained twelve gentlemen, the chiefs of the rebellion. Then the king appeared looking more than pale—he was livid. Marie was at his right, and Catherine at his left. No acclamations greeted his arrival, and he said—

"Ah! M. le Cardinal, you see you did wrong to bring me here."

The cardinal waved his hand as a signal, and a few faint cries of "Vive le Roi!" were heard. The Duc de Nemours stood by in great agitation. It will be remembered that Castlenau had surrendered on his pledged word that the lives of himself and those with him should be spared, and when he first saw that it was about to be violated, he had successively implored the duke and cardinal—the king and queen, but had been answered through the chancellor, that a king was not bound to keep faith with rebel subjects.

He, as well as Gabriel, who stood near him had been brought there by a faint hope of saving Castlenau at the last. After a quarter of an hour, only four remained. The usher then cried, "Albert Edmund, Comte de Mazeres, guilty of heresy and high treason."

"It is false!" cried the count. Then, showing the people his arms broken and blackened by the torture "See!" said he, "the state to which they have re-

duced me in the king's name, but I know that he was ignorant of it, and I cry none the less, 'Vive le roi!'"

His head fell while his brothers sang their verse.

Then was called, "Jean Louis Alberic, Baron de Raunay, guilty of heresy and high treason."

"A lie!" cried he. "It was the Duc de Guise and the cardinal, alone, whom we attacked. I trust they will die as tranquilly as I do." And he laid his head on the block.

Then came Robert Jean Briquemont, Comte de Vilmougis, against whom the same charge was made.

He dipped his hands into the blood of Raunay, and raising them to heaven, cried, "Father in heaven, Thou wilt take vengeance for the blood of thy children," and he fell.

There now remained only Castlenau, who advanced, singing. The Duc de Nemours had bribed the executioner to delay while he tried one last effort. He turned to Catherine, and said, "Can we not save this last, madam?"

"I can do nothing," said she, turning away her head.

Even the crowd were moved as Castlenau mounted the steps, still singing, and cried loudly, "Mercy, mercy."

Gabriel rushed forward, and holding up his hands to Marie, cried, "Pity, Madame la Reine."

She turned round, and bending her knee to the king, said, "Sire, I beg you to pardon this last one."

"Sire," cried the Duc de Nemours, "has not enough of blood flowed?"

"Sire," said the cardinal, "remember your duties."

"Yes, I do," said the king; "I pardon the Baron de Castlenau."

But the cardinal, feigning to misunderstand, had made a sign so imperative to the executioner, that while the king still spoke, Castlenau's head rolled on the scaffold.

CHAPTER XC.

THE KING'S ILLNESS.

From this time the health of the king grew rapidly worse, and at the expiration of seven months, towards the end of November, 1560, he was obliged to take to his bed.

Two or three nights after, Marie stood by his bedside, watching, weeping, and praying. Near them were seated Catherine de Medicis and the Cardinal de Lorraine. Catherine had not been idle during these last seven months, but, in her hatred of the Guises, had allied herself with the Prince de Condé, Antoine de Bourbon, and even the Constable Montmorency. These new and strange friends, excited by her, had fomented insurrections in different provinces. But the Guises had convoked the States-General at Orleans, and had summoned to them the King of Navarre and the prince.

Catherine had endeavoured to dissuade them from going, but the cardinal had obtained the promise of the king for their safety, and they came. Immediately on their arrival they were thrown into prison, and the prince tried and condemned to death by an extraordinary commission. They only waited for the signature of the chancellor, who still held out, to carry out the sentence.

If the king could live but two or three days more the Prince de Condé would be executed, and Catherine exiled, and the Guises would reign alone. If he died before they had disposed of their enemies, they would be in a very different position. Thus these two watched, not so much for the life or death of the king, as for the triumph or defeat of their party.

"Softer, my uncle. I beg," said Marie, as the cardinal spoke, "you will wake the king. See! you have woke him."

"Marie, where are you?" said the feeble voice of François.

"Here, by you, dear François."

"Oh, how I suffer—my head is like fire. This constant pain, I suffer even in sleep. Oh! I am dying."

"Do not say so, François."

"My memory fails me—have I received the sacrament?"

"Yes, all your duties have been performed; do not torment yourself."

"I wish to see my confessor."

"He shall be here immediately."

"Have they prayed for me?"

"I have scarcely ceased since morning."

"Poor dear Marie!"

"Your mother and the cardinal are here—do you wish to see them?"

"No, no, only you, Marie. Turn a little, that I may see you better."

"Courage, dear François. God is good, and I pray always."

"But I suffer so—I can see no longer. Your hand, Marie."

"Lean on me."

"My soul to God—my heart to you, Marie. Alas! to die at seventeen. Do not weep so, Marie; we shall meet above. In all this world I regret nothing but you—if I could take you with me I should be happy to die. But you—what will you do without me?"

"But you shall not die; I have still a great hope—a chance in which I have much faith."

"What is that?" said Catherine, advancing in astonishment.

"Yes, I believe all these physicians to be ignorant, and I have sent for one—a skilful man, who saved my uncle's life at Calais."

"M. Ambroise Paré?"

"Yes; they all said that he ought not to have the royal life in his hands; that he was a heretic and could not be confided in."

"That is certain," said Catherine.

"But I confide in him, and I have sent a sure friend for him. I know he will come soon."

"And who is this friend?"

"M. de Montgomery, madam."

CHAPTER XCI.

A GLEAM OF HOPE.

As she spoke, Madame Dazette entered and announced the Comte de Montgomery.

"Oh! let him enter," said Marie.

"One moment, madam," said Catherine; "before this man enters, let me, at least, leave the room. If it pleases you to confide the life of the son to him who killed the father, it does not please me to remain and see it, and I protest against his presence here." Then she left the room without even casting a look on her dying son. She only went, however, into the adjoining room, leaving the door open that she might hear all that passed.

"Well?" cried Marie, as Gabriel entered.

"Madam, he is here."

"Thanks, faithful friend."

"Is the king then worse, madam?" asked Gabriel, casting an anxious look on the pale form extended before him.

"Alas! he is at least no better. Pray let M. Paré come in."

Marie ran to him as he entered and led him to the bed, saying, "Thank you for coming at once, monsieur. I count on your zeal and science."

François lay exhausted by suffering, and with hardly sufficient strength even to groan. M. Paré looked earnestly at his pale thin face, then touched gently the swelling of the right ear, where the pain lay.

"Oh! I suffer," murmured the king.

M. Paré asked for a light to be brought near. The queen brought it herself and held it while he tenderly examined the seat of the malady. Then he drew back, grave and thoughtful. Marie tremblingly examined his countenance without daring to speak.

At last, unable to bear this silence, she cried, "What! is there no hope?"

"There is but one, madam."

"Then there is one?"

"Yes, it exists, and I should have great hope, if——"

"If what?"

"If the patient were not the king, madam?"

"Oh! treat him like the meanest of his subjects."

"But if I fail—and God only has the disposal of life and death—will they not accuse me, a Huguenot, of having caused his death? This terrible responsibility would make my hand tremble, when it should be most firm."

"Listen. If he lives I will bless you all my life, and if he dies I will defend you to my last breath. So try, I implore you. Since you say it is the only chance, would it not be a crime to withhold your aid?"

"You are right, madam, and I will try, if I am permitted; for I do not conceal from you that the method I should employ is extreme, unusual, and, in appearance, violent and dangerous."

"Really!" cried Marie, trembling; "and is there no other?"

"None; and there must be no delay. In twenty-four hours it may be too late. There is a deposit formed in the head of the king, and if immediate issue be not given to it by an operation, it would overflow the brain, and cause death."

"Would you operate at once?" said the cardinal.

"I should not like to take the entire responsibility on myself."

"Ah! you doubt already. But, no——"

"I must have daylight. To-morrow morning, at

nine o'clock, I will be here. You be here also, madam, and you, M. le Cardinal, and the Duc de Guise, or any one whose devotion to the king is certain; but, if possible, no doctors. Then I will explain my idea, and, if you authorise me, I will try it."

"And until to-morrow?" said Marie.

"Give the king this, madam. It will send him into a profound sleep, and be careful that it is not interrupted."

"I will watch myself; I will not leave this place to-night."

"Do so, madam, for it is important. And now I will leave you, to prepare for my great work."

"Monsieur, I thank you much; and you, also, M. de Montgomery, for your zeal and devotion. Will you accompany M. Paré to-morrow?"

"I will, madam."

"And I, also, will be there," said Catherine to herself, "for this man is capable of saving the king—the fool—and ruining his party, the prince, and me."

CHAPTER XCII.

SLEEP WELL GUARDED.

Marie gave the king the sleeping potion as directed, and had the pleasure of seeing him fall into a peaceful slumber. "Now, uncle," said she, "there is nothing to detain you here, for I mean to watch until the king wakes. Go and get some repose."

"No; my brother, whom business has kept away till now, told me that he would come the last thing, and inquire after the king, and I promised that he should find me here. But stay, is not that his step?"

"Oh! do not let him make a noise," said she, running into the ante-room to caution him.

The duke entered pale and agitated. He did not even ask after the king, but bowing to Marie, drew

his brother aside to speak to him. "Terrible news!" said he.

"What is it?"

"The Constable de Montmorency has quitted Chantilly with 1500 men, and will be at the gates of Orleans to-morrow. I have just been informed of it.'

"That is terrible indeed. He comes to save his nephew, of course?"

"And all the people of Orleans are disaffected—Huguenots or Bourbonites. How is the king?"

"Bad; but Ambroise Paré, who has arrived at the queen's invitation, hopes still to save him by a hazardous experiment, but which will, probably, have happy results. Be here at nine o'clock to support M. Paré if needful."

"Certainly; for it is our best hope. But how I should like to send to the constable the head of his fine nephew, the Prince de Condé, to greet him."

"And the chancellor still holds out. But if we could get the king's signature, would not that suffice?"

"It is not strictly legal, but it would do."

"Well, leave it all to me. It is two o'clock, and you have need of repose. Leave to me the care of our fortunes."

"What are you about to do? Take no decisive step without at least consulting me."

"Be easy. If I get what I want, I will come very early and consult with you."

"Well then, I will go, for, in truth, I am exhausted."

He said a few words of condolence to Marie, and then retired.

The cardinal sat down to a table, and made a copy of the sentence of the commission who had tried M. de Condé, and then rose.

Marie advanced towards him, and said, "What are you about to do?"

"Madam, it is indispensable that the king should sign this paper."

"What is indispensable is, that the king sleeps."

"His name to this, and I will importune him no more."

"I cannot permit you to awaken him; besides, he is incapable of holding a pen."

"I will hold it for him."

"I have said I will not allow it."

The cardinal stopped for a moment; then he resumed, in an insinuating tone, "Listen, madam—my dear niece. I will tell you what it is; you may be sure I would respect the king's sleep, were I not constrained by weighty motives. It is our fortune—our safety and yours—that is in question. If the king do not sign this paper before daybreak, we are lost."

"I cannot help it."

"But, once more—our ruin is yours, child that you are."

"What do I care for your ambitions? My ambition is to save him—to preserve his life if I can—to guard his precious sleep. M. Paré has confided his repose to me, and I forbid you to trouble it. Listen to me in turn—I forbid it. The king dead, my royalty dies. I care not much for that; but while he has a breath of life, I will protect it against these odious intrigues. I have contributed, my uncle, more than I ought, to strengthen the power in your hands when François was well, but this power I resume at once, when it concerns, perhaps, the last few hours of calm which God has granted to him in this life. The king will need all his strength for to-morrow, and no one in the world shall rob him of it."

"But when the motive is so grave and urgent——"

"No one shall awaken the king under any pretext, however urgent."

"Oh! but it must be; the interests of the State come before sentiment. The signature of the king is necessary, and I will have it;" and he attempted to advance.

But Marie stood before him, and barred the door. They looked at each other with flashing eyes

"I will pass," said he.

"You dare to lay a hand on me!"

"My niece."

"No, monsieur, your queen!" This was said in a tone so firm, that the cardinal drew back. "Yes, your queen!" continued she; "and if you attempt to advance, while you go to the king, I will go to that door; and, uncle, minister, and cardinal though you are, I will summon the guard, and have you arrested for high treason immediately."

"What a scandal!"

"It will be your doing, monsieur." She looked at once so firm, so agitated, and so beautiful, that even this man of bronze gave way.

"Well, then," said he, with a deep sigh, "I will wait till he wakes."

"Thank you," said Marie, quietly.

"But at least the moment he does wake——"

"If he be in a state to understand you, uncle, I will oppose you no further."

The cardinal was obliged to be satisfied. He returned to his chair, and Marie to her prie-dieu; but the long hours of the night passed, and the king did not wake. It was long since he had slept so well. Once or twice he moved, and uttered a groan, and the cardinal started up, but was obliged to sit down again, disappointed, crushing the paper impatiently in his hands. The lights began to burn low, and the cold light of the winter morning to appear. At last, as eight o'clock struck, the king opened his eyes, and called,—

"Marie, are you there?"

"Always," answered she.

The cardinal rushed forward with the paper in his hand. It was yet, perhaps, time—a scaffold was soon erected — but, at the same instant, Catherine de Medicis entered. "Too late!" thought he. "Ah! fortune abandons us: if M. Paré does not save the king, we are lost."

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE ROYAL DEATH-BED.

CATHERINE had not been idle during the night. She had invited a large number of her partisans, and all the royal physicians, to be at nine o'clock in the antechamber of the king's bedroom.

She now advanced to the king's bed, and, after kissing his hand, sat down. The Duc de Guise entered soon after.

"You have done nothing?" said he to his brother.

"Alas! I could not. Have you news of Montmorency?"

"No; he is perhaps now at the gates of the city. If Paré fail, adieu to our fortunes."

The doctors sent for by the queen-mother now arrived, and they were led by her to the bed. The sufferings and groans of the patient had recommenced, and they examined him again, and then retired to consult. One proposed a poultice, others recommended the injection of a lotion into the ear, and they had just decided on this when M. Paré entered.

His fame was now beginning to be established, so the physicians told him what they had decided upon.

"The remedy is insufficient," said he, "and yet time presses; the brain will soon be affected."

"Oh! hasten then, in heaven's name," cried Marie.

Catherine and the Guises each now approached the doctors, and spoke to them.

"Have you, then," said Chapelain, the first physician, to Paré, "a better remedy to propose?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"We must trepan the king."

"Trepan the king!" cried the doctors, with horror.

"What sort of an operation is this?" said the duke.

"It is little known yet, monseigneur," said Paré; "but it consists in making, with an instrument invented by me, an opening in the head the size of a shilling."

"Good heavens!" cried Catherine. "On the king's head you would dare——"

"Yes, madam."

"But it would be an assassination."

"Madam, how many heads are cut open in battle—not skilfully, but violently—and yet we cure the wound."

"Well," said the cardinal, "do you answer for the king's life?"

"God alone holds life and death in his hands, monseigneur. All I can say is, that this is the last chance of saving the king."

"Have you ever performed this operation with success, M. Paré?" said the duke.

"Yes, monseigneur; a short time ago on a M. Bretesche, Rue de la Harpe; and once at the siege of Calais, on M. de Fienne."

"Yes, I remember. Well, I hesitate no longer.—I give my consent to the operation."

"And I," said Marie.

"And not I," said Catherine.

"Not, madam, when you hear that it is our last chance?"

"Who says so? M. Paré, a heretic. The other doctors do not."

"No, madam," said Chapelain, "we protest against it."

"Ah! you see."

The duke, who was greatly agitated, led Catherine aside, and said, "Madam, I understand; you wish your son to die, and the Prince de Condé to live. You are in league with the Bourbons, and even with Montmorency; I know all But take care—I warn you."

But Catherine was not to be intimidated. She escaped from him, ran to the door, and called the chancellor, who was waiting there by her orders. "M. de l'Hôpital," said she, "they are about to authorise a cruel and hazardous operation on the king, and I—his mother—and the physicians protest against it. Register my declaration."

"Shut that door!" cried the duke. And in spite of the murmurs of the gentlemen collected outside, Gabriel did as the duke ordered.

The chancellor alone remained.

"Now, M. de l'Hôpital," said the duke; "know that this operation alone can save the life of the king, and that the queen and I authorise it, and that I answer for the skill of the surgeon."

"And I," said Paré, "accept all the responsibility that they desire to impose upon me. Let them take my life, if I do not save the king's. But alas! it is full time—look at his majesty."

François, indeed, livid and motionless, seemed no longer to hear or understand. He was not even sensible of the caresses of Marie.

"Oh! hasten, in pity's name!" cried she. "Try only to save his life, and I will protect you."

"So be it," said Paré. "Leave me, gentlemen; I have need of the greatest calm." He then took out his instruments, and had already leaned over towards the patient, when an immense tumult was heard, and the Constable de Montmorency burst in, followed by a crowd of gentlemen.

"I come àpropos!" cried he, and they all rushed towards the bed.

Even by force it was no longer possible to be masters of the royal chamber.

"I retire," cried Paré, in despair.

"M. Parè, I, the queen, order you to proceed," said Marie.

"Ah! madam, I told you I must have quiet, and look here. M. Chapelain, try your injection."

"It is all ready," said Chapelain, and immediately,

assisted by the others, he injected his preparation into the ear of the king. Marie stood by, in despair.

Then François, after a few moments, rose suddenly, opened his eyes, and tried to speak, but fell back, dead.

"Oh! madam, you have killed your son," cried Marie, rushing wildly towards Catherine.

Catherine looked at her with a glance full of the hatred which she had restrained so long. "You, my dear," said she, "have no longer the right to speak thus, for you are no longer queen. Oh! yes, queen in Scotland; we will send you to reign among your mists."

Marie Stuart, unable to bear more, fell sobbing and almost fainting, beside the bed.

"Monsieur," said Catherine to the duke, "the States-General, which was all in your hands just now, belong at present to us. It has been agreed between M. de Bourbon and myself, that he is to be lieutenant-general of the kingdom, and that I shall be regent; but, as you are still grand master—fulfil your duty, and announce the king's death. And you, Madame de Fiesque, bring in M. le Duc d'Orléans."

Then the Duc de Guise cried, in a hollow voice, "The king is dead!"

The king at arms repeated after him, "The king is dead! Pray for his soul," and immediately the first gentleman answered, "Vive le Roi!"

At the same moment, Madame de Fiesque entered, leading the Duc d'Orléans. Catherine took him by the hand, while all the courtiers cried, "Vive Charles the Ninth!"

"Alas!" said Marie, kissing the cold hand of François, "there is no one that grieves for you but me."

"And I, madam," said Gabriel, advancing.

"Oh! thanks," said Marie, with an eloquent glance.

"Perhaps, I shall do more than deplore," added he; "perhaps I shall avenge him, in avenging myself."

Even he thought of himself in the presence of the dead.

CHAPTER XCIV.

ADIEU FRANCE.

EIGHT months after the death of François, on the 15th August, 1561, Marie Stuart was about to embark for Scotland. These eight months she had disputed day by day, and almost hour by hour, with Catherine de Medicis, and even with her uncles, who, for different reasons, wished her gone. But Marie could not bear to leave the country where she had been so happy and so loved. She had first retired to Rheims, near her uncle the cardinal; but the growing troubles in Scotland required her presence there, and, on the other hand, the almost passionate admiration which Charles the Ninth, still a child, manifested for his sister-in-law, disquieted Catherine, and determined her more than ever to get rid of Marie.

She was obliged, therefore, to resign herself to say adieu to France. Her regrets have descended to posterity in the well-known verses preserved by Brantome, who accompanied her to Scotland.

On the day after her departure, Gabriel set off for St. Quentin, to which he had been summoned by a letter from Diana. He had delayed one day after he had received the letter, for the purpose of paying his last respects to Marie Stuart as she embarked.

At the gate of St. Quentin he met Jean Peuquoy, who was waiting for him. "Ah! there you are, M. le Comte," said he. "I was sure you would come, but it is unfortunately too late."

"How too late?" said Gabriel, alarmed.

"Did not the letter of Madame de Castro request you to come yesterday?"

"Yes; but without giving a reason, or making any point of it."

"Well, M. le Comte, it was yesterday that she

pronounced the irrevocable vows which separate her for ever from the world."

Gabriel turned pale.

"If you had been here, you might perhaps have prevented it," continued Jean.

"No," said Gabriel, sadly, "I should not have dared to oppose it. It was doubtless the will of God, which detained me at Calais. My heart would have been torn at my inability to prevent this sacrifice, and she would have suffered more from my presence than from being alone."

"Oh! she was not alone, her mother was with her."

"What! Madame de Poitiers?"

"Yes, comte, her daughter wrote to her to announce her intention, and she came at once."

"What could make her come?"

"Monsieur, she is, after all, her mother."

"I do not think she could come for any good—not to fulfil a duty. But let us go to the convent, M. Jean; I must see Diana."

Gabriel was expected, and immediately admitted. Diana and her mother were together. Gabriel, seeing Diana after so long an absence, by an irresistible impulse, threw himself upon his knees before the grating which now separated them for ever. "My sister," cried he.

"My brother," she answered, while a tear coursed slowly down her cheek, but she smiled like an angel.

Madame de Poitiers, beside her, laughed like a demon. "It is, doubtless, as your sister in God, monsieur, that you so address Madame de Castro," said she.

"What do you mean, madam?" said Gabriel, rising, with a shudder.

Diana de Poitiers turned to her daughter, "My child," said she, "I will now confide to you a secret which I think it my duty to conceal no longer. It was not only to bless you, my child, that I left the retirement, where, thanks to M. de Montgomery, I have lived for the last two years. I believe that yes-

terday I could with a word have arrested the vows on your lips; but how could I, a poor sinner, take from God a soul so devoted to him? So I was silent. But to-day I break this silence, because I see, from the grief and ardour of M. de Montgomery, that you still occupy all his thoughts. Now it is necessary that he should forget you, and if he still nurses the illusion that you are his sister—the daughter of the Comte de Montgomery—he will let his thoughts fly to you without remorse. It would be a crime which I cannot sanction; therefore, know, my child, that you are really the daughter of Henry the Second, whom M. de Montgomery killed at the tournament."

"Horrible!" cried Diana, hiding her face in her hands.

"You lie! madam," said Gabriel, passionately. "You must lie. What proofs have you that you speak the truth?"

"This," replied she, quietly taking a paper from her bosom. "It is," continued she, "a letter from your father, written a few days before his imprisonment, as you may see, in which he complains of my rigour, as you may also see, but consoles himself by thinking that I shall soon be his wife. The terms of this letter are clear, I hope. Therefore, you see that it will be impious of you to think any more of Diana, for she is not united to you by any ties of blood. By sparing you this impiety, I trust I have acquitted my debt towards you, and paid you for the happiness which you have procured for me in my solitude."

Gabriel meanwhile had read the letter, which was, indeed, all she had said. It was like a voice from the dead to reveal the truth. When the unfortunate young man raised his eyes, he saw Diana de Castro lying fainting on the ground. Instinctively he rushed towards her, but was stopped by the bars. He turned and saw Madame de Poitiers with a smile on her lips; he could bear no more, but crying, "Adieu, Diana," rushed from the room.

Outside the convent, Jean Peuquoy was waiting for

him. "Do not speak to me—ask me nothing," cried Gabriel. Then, seeing Jean looking at him with astonishment—"Pardon me," said he, "I believe I am nearly mad. I dare not think or speak of her. Come with me to the gate—if you will—I must return to Paris."

Jean Peuquoy walked with him and endeavoured to distract his thoughts by telling him of Babette—how well and happy she was—how he was once more prospering at St. Quentin, and that he had recently had news of Martin Guerre. But Gabriel did not hear him.

Still, when they came to the gate, he pressed his hand warmly, and said, "Adieu, friend, and thanks for your kindness. Remember me to all, and you, who are happy, think sometimes of me who suffer," and without waiting for any further answer than the tears which shone in Jean's eyes, he mounted his horse and galloped away.

On his arrival at Paris he went straight to Admiral Coligny. "Monsieur," said he, "I feel sure that the persecutions and religious wars will recommence before long. Henceforward, I offer myself to your cause, not only in heart but with my sword. My life is yours for the future."

Gabriel's history from this time was that of the religious wars which rendered the reign of Charles the Ninth so sanguinary. He played a terrible part in them, and his name often made Catherine tremble At the battle of Dreux, where he performed prodigies, he wounded M. de Montmorency, and at the battle of St. Denis, where the constable fell by a pistol shot, M. de Montgomery was recognised as the man who fired.

He himself seemed invulnerable. We may read in De Thou how Gabriel at last, betrayed by one of his men, took refuge in the tower of Domfroit, which he defended for twelve days with only fifty men, against Matignon with two regiments, 600 horse, and powerful artillery. When all hope was lost, Gabriel wished to kill himself, to avoid falling alive into the hands of

his enemies, but Matignon swore to him that if he would surrender his life should be spared. On this he surrendered. He should have remembered Castlenau.

The same day he was sent, bound, to Paris. Catherine de Medicis held him at last; Charles the Ninth had just died, and they were awaiting the arrival of Henry the Third from Poland, and she was queen regent and all-powerful. He was condemned to death on the 26th of June, 1674. For fourteen years he had fought against the wife and son of Henry the Second.

On the 27th, after undergoing the question extraordinary, he was carried to the scaffold and beheaded, Catherine being present at the execution.

Diana de Castro had died in the previous year—Abbess of the Benedictines at St. Quentin.

THE END.

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